Policy Studies 7

The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics

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Contents

List of Acronyms

PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

This paper is a guide to the historical arguments made by the primary parties to the Tibet-China conflict. Given the polarization that has characterized this issue for decades, it is surprising that little has been done to analyze or at least disentangle the strands of historical argumentation that the parties have been using. This paper attempts to do this by relying as much as possible on the key assertions as they have been framed in Chinese and Tibetan sources. Chinese- and Tibetan-language materials dealing with the historical status of Tibet are often more detailed and better documented, and hew more closely then English-language materials do to the thinking of the people most directly concerned with (and affected by) the Tibet-China conflict.

The status of Tibet is at the core of the dispute, as it has been for all parties drawn into it over the past century. China maintains that Tibet is an inalienable part of China. Tibetans maintain that Tibet has historically been an independent country. In reality, the conflict over Tibet's status has been a conflict over history. When Chinese writers and political figures assert that Tibet is a part of China, they do so not on the basis of Chinese rule being good rule (although they do not hesitate to make that assertion, either), but on the basis of history. As one of China's more well-known spokesmen once put it, "'Is Tibet, after all, a part of China?' History says it is."

The fundamental place of history in the Tibet issue is not something imposed by outside parties. Even though the Dalai Lama and his

government-in-exile appear quite at ease with accepting Tibet as a part of China, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has pointedly accused the Dalai Lama of duplicity, stating that his unwillingness to recognize Tibet as having been an integral part of China for centuries renders his acquiescence unacceptable. The centrality of history in the question of Tibet's status could not be clearer.

This paper looks at the evolution of both Chinese and Tibetan positions, then at the prevailing views currently held by advocates on either side of the issue, and finally at how the major assertions made about Tibet's historical status stand up against the historical record as reflected in relevant primary-source materials in Chinese and Tibetan. Contemporary secondary literature on the Tibet issue has until now not been based on this sort of approach.

This paper provides new details and new insights for those concerned with the basic historical arguments that underlie the crucial issue of Tibet's status. It will show that positions on the Tibet issue said to be reflective of centuries of popular consensus are actually very recent constructions often at variance with the history on which they claim to be based. In some areas critical aspects of history have been misconstrued by both sides.

Thus, China's contention that Tibet has been an "integral" part of China since the thirteenth century took shape only in the twentieth century. Moreover, as late as the 1950s, Chinese writers were accustomed to describing Tibet's place in the world of imperial China as that of a subordinate vassal state, not an integral part of China, as current Chinese materials put it. Indeed, for quite some time after Tibet was incorporated into the PRC, Chinese narratives of that process were often vague and beset by contradictory chronologies.

Similarly, the Tibetan concept of a "priest-patron" religious relationship governing Sino-Tibetan relations to the exclusion of concrete political subordination is itself a rather recent construction. Ample evidence shows that Tibetan religious figures entertained religious and spiritual relationships with emperors of several dynasties, sometimes under conditions in which Tibet was politically subordinate to the dynasty in question and at other times under conditions in which Tibet was independent. The priest-patron relationship was simply not a barometer of Tibet's status, in spite of current Tibetan use of it as such.

In addition, one of the major contentions of the Tibetan government-in-exile—that Tibet was invaded in 1949—is a complex and ambiguous

issue. The Tibetan government signaled it was under attack only in 1950, when PRC forces crossed into the territories under the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama's government. Tibetan areas outside the Dalai Lama's jurisdiction had already been incorporated into the PRC. The insistence in recent decades on 1949 as the date of Tibet's invasion is an attempt to define these territories as part of Tibet. Complexity is added to the issue by the fact that these territories have been significant in Tibet's conflict with China. Their cultural place in the Tibetan world is important; the present Dalai Lama comes from this part of the Tibetan Plateau.

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> For more than 700 years the central government of China has continuously exercised sovereignty over Tibet and Tibet has never been an independent state.[1]
>
> PRC official White Paper, 1992

> At the time of its invasion by troops of the People's Liberation Army of China in 1949, Tibet was an independent state in fact and law. The military invasion constituted an aggression on a sovereign state and a violation of international law.[2]
>
> Tibetan Government-in-Exile, 1993

This paper is intended as something of a Baedeker for those attempting to cross the contested terrain of historical arguments mustered by the primary parties to the Tibet-China conflict. It has long been a common assumption that the positions of both parties on the historical status of Tibet are highly polarized. Such an assumption is understandable, given that historical evidence is commonly at the core of most assertions about the justice or injustice of Tibet's contemporary status. Yet little has been done to analyze or at least disentangle the strands of historical argumentation that the parties have used for well over half a century now. In attempting to do just that, this paper examines some of the major assertions made by Tibetan and Chinese writers in support of the propositions that Tibet was historically a part of China or historically independent of China. It is hoped that this

study will be useful to those trying to understand the conflicting views that lie at the heart of the impasse over Tibet.

To that end, many of the key assertions on the issue are presented in the following pages as they are framed in Chinese and Tibetan. Using those original formulations is important in large measure because Chinese- and Tibetan-language materials on the issue are often more detailed and better documented, and hew more closely than English-language materials do to the thinking of the people most directly concerned with (and affected by) the Tibet-China conflict. The research underlying this paper is not limited to Tibetan- and Chinese-language materials, however. English-language materials are also used, albeit with the caveat that English-language materials emanating from the Chinese and Tibetan sides are often more solidly polemical and aimed at swaying third parties rather than at making the case that Tibetans and Chinese make to themselves. Having said this, though, it must also be acknowledged that materials produced by the Tibetan exile community are often disproportionately in English, a result of the very circumstance of exile in India.

This paper looks first at the evolution of both Chinese and Tibetan positions, then examines the prevailing views currently held by advocates on the two sides of the issue, and concludes by examining major assertions made about Tibet's historical status against the historical record as reflected in relevant primary-source materials. By and large this has not been done in the existing secondary literature on Tibet; certainly not by direct reference to Chinese- and Tibetan-language sources. It will come as no shock to those interested in issues of nationalism and identity to find (as this paper shows) that positions said to be reflective of centuries of popular consensus on the Tibet issue are actually very recent constructions often at variance with the very history on which they claim to be based. Other readers, however, may be surprised to find critical aspects of history broadly misconstrued by both sides.

positions said to be reflective of centuries of popular consensus on the Tibet issue are actually very recent constructions

Among other things we will observe that China's contention that Tibet has been an "integral" part of China since the thirteenth century took shape only in the twentieth century. Similarly, we will see that the Tibetan concept of a "priest-patron" relationship governing Sino-Tibetan relations to the exclusion of concrete political subordination is likewise a rather

recent construction, one belied by the actual bonds that existed between Tibet and several imperial dynasties.

The Question of Tibet's Historical Status

The status of Tibet has been a subject of contention and polemics in one form or another for well over a century, and not simply for Chinese and Tibetans. The British rulers of India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries felt a strategic need to deal with the issue and, observing the impotence of the declining Qing dynasty (1644–1911) in Tibet, concluded that its authority there was wholly without substance. Early in 1903 Lord Curzon, then viceroy of India, characterized Tibetan refusals to deal directly with his government out of deference to Qing authority as part of a "solemn farce." His verdict came to be an oft-repeated part of the subsequent English-language literature on Tibet's history and status:

> We regard the so-called suzerainty of China over Tibet as a constitutional fiction—a political affectation which has only been maintained because of its convenience to both parties. … As a matter of fact, the two Chinese Ambans at Lhasa are there not as Viceroys, but as Ambassadors; and the entire Chinese soldiery by whom this figment of Chinese suzerainty is sustained in Tibet consists of less than 500 ill-armed men.[3]

The status of Tibet has been at the core of the Tibet issue for all parties drawn into it over the past century. Regardless of third-party pronouncements, however, the core of the conflict has been the positions held by Tibet and China. The heart of China's position has remained essentially steady: Tibet is an inalienable part of China.[4] At the same time, Tibet's government—with less than total consistency—has largely maintained that Tibet has historically been an independent country.

In reality, the conflict over Tibet's status has been a conflict over history. This is not to say that the entire Tibet issue is reducable to a historical dispute. Questions of demography, economic development, cultural and human rights, etc., are important parts of the Tibet issue. When Chinese writers and political figures assert that Tibet is a part of China, however, they do so not on the basis of Chinese rule being good rule (although they do not hesitate to make that assertion), but on the basis of history.[5] One of China's more well-known spokesmen of previous decades formulated the matter succinctly: "'Is Tibet, after all, a part of China?' History says

it is."[6] Even more manifestly, a volume published in 1986 by the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences and bearing a title that translates as "Tibet Is an Inseparable Part of China" directly identified the basic argument about Tibet's status with the historical record: the 595-page tome consists of almost nothing but annotated extracts from Chinese historical sources and documents.[7] The clear foundation for Chinese assertions of Tibet's status as a part of China is the historical record. Tibetans who advocate the justice of Tibetan independence do so also on the basis of history, although they also adduce a variety of other factors that divide Tibetans and Chinese, such as language, culture, and religion.[8]

Thus, history must, of necessity, be the focus of this paper. It is the most significant battleground over which those positions that are conveniently described as "Chinese" and "Tibetan" clash. The centrality of history has not precluded other elements from being brought into the discussion, but the conflict over Tibet, inasmuch as it is a question of resolving a dispute between the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Tibetans who contest its claim to Tibet, is a conflict over legitimacy. And the primary witness the parties on both sides call on to support their claims of legitimacy is history.

Chinese writers have often presented the issue as one for which the correct interpretation is, from the historical standpoint, self-evident. The following statement is one of many iterations of a ubiquitous element in many Chinese polemics and statements about Tibet: "As is known to all, Tibet has, since the 13th century, been an inalienable part of China's territory."[9] But such rhetoric masks the fact that the differing present-day positions on Tibet's status, based though they are on interpretations of history, lack roots going back to the historical events and periods summoned as proof. The currently recognized positions asserting Chinese sovereignty on one side and Tibetan independence on the other have, in their separate ways, coalesced in their present forms only in the second half of the twentieth century.

Effectively, the rhetorical twist "as is known to all …" seeks to cut short any serious examination of a subject that warrants sustained discussion and engagement. To reiterate, the core of the Tibet issue is the question of Tibet's historical status; one's understanding of that history obviously colors, if not wholly decides, one's view of the legitimacy of Tibet's incorporation into the PRC. And so, discussions of the Tibet issue turn back to the ur-question: Was Tibet historically a part of China?

As should become clear in the pages that follow, an examination of the history bearing on that question forces one to engage with certain cultural and political factors as well. Certainly, if all that were needed to resolve matters were an unbiased examination of the historical record, the issue would long since have been resolved to the satisfaction of all. But alas, such is not the case, for the question of Tibet does not stand in isolation. Indeed, to question the legitimacy of Tibet's incorporation into the PRC is to question the legitimacy of the idea of the Chinese state as constructed by the Chinese Communist Party; it is to raise questions against the cultural and political nationalism that has been fostered within the PRC and that has taken root both inside and outside official party and governmental circles. These are no small matters. The serious implications couched in any doubts about the historical validity of Tibet's place in the PRC are a primary cause for the vociferous reactions from Chinese writers to such questions. Tibet's history has become a fundamental and existential issue, one that has significant bearing on the modern identity of China.

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This paper will examine positions adopted on the different sides of the divide over Tibet. It will set out some of the basic arguments made by Chinese writers and polemicists, in official and semi-official publications. It will examine what a variety of Tibetan and pro-Tibetan writers and figures posit as the historical case for Tibet. Additionally, it will discuss some elements of the historical record apart from the arguments advanced by advocates of one or the other side. Finally, it will explore the significance and implications of the debate within a larger context.

The Evolution of the Chinese Position

As stated above, the primary battleground for the argument over Tibet's status is history, and that history is often presented from the Chinese perspective as self-evidently supportive of Chinese assertions. Arguments have been made for at least a century about Tibet's status as a part of China. Although brief assertions of the rightness of Tibet's place within China can be traced back this far, however, a relatively intense documentary case has been presented by China only over the last two decades with the publication of several collections of documents meant to buttress and

clearly prove the point.[10]

In the twilight of imperial dynastic rule in China, the subjection of Tibet to the Qing dynasty was still recognized by all parties, in form if not in substance. The actual nature of Tibet's tie to the Qing, however, was subject to different interpretations and, as might be expected, this imprecision made Tibet a continuing issue in Qing relations with Britain and Russia. British officials and writers tended to refer consistently to Qing dominance as a form of "suzerainty," a term whose vagueness came to bedevil later interpretations of Sino-Tibetan relations. Moreover, Curzon's dismissal of Qing authority was hardly a detached, dispassionate judgment: it was set against the context of British India's need to secure India's frontiers and eliminate any possibility of threats or concerns emanating from Tibet. In effect, this required placing Tibet at least within the orbit of British influence. The fears of Curzon and others were predicated on the possible threat to India that might extend from Russia, with its Central Asian interests; a threat from the Qing was hardly imaginable. And so, in seeking to block Russian designs in Inner Asia, Britain became party to several agreements and treaties that acknowledged Tibet's subordination to China.[11] Present-day Chinese treatments of and statements on the status of Tibet do not give any primary weight to these agreements, given that they are, in the eyes of modern Chinese, the products of an era in which China was reduced to a semi-colony by imperialist aggression.[12]

Tibet's historical relationship to China was cast in its present formulation only after the People's Republic of China had been established. But the Republic of China had also dealt with the issue during the time that it held sway on the Chinese mainland (1911–49). In fact, when negotiations to resolve the Tibet issue were attempted in Simla in 1913–14, the Chinese delegation came with a clear statement of what it held to be the historical status of Tibet. Accordingly, the Chinese delegation submitted to the conference on October 30, 1913, its position that Tibet had been incorporated into the Mongol Empire in 1206 and remained in this relationship (i.e., that of an imperial dominion) to China during the Ming period (1368–1644). Significantly, the Chinese statement elaborates on the aftermath of the Gurkha invasion of Tibet, which resulted in the Tibeto-Nepalese War of 1792–94:

> so powerless and helpless were the Tibetans that they again went to China for assistance. To their supplication China responded at once by sending over 50,000 soldiers to Tibet; and accordingly the Gurkhas

> were driven out of the country. Tibet was then definitely placed under the sovereignty of China.[13]

During the Republican era this basic historical claim was maintained, albeit with some significant variation. As will be discussed later, while Republican-era writers maintained China's claim to sovereign rights over Tibet, they tended to view Tibet as having been a vassal state of the Qing rather than (as the present-day Chinese position has it) an integral part of China. More potently, Republican pronouncements about the place of Tibet within the Chinese nation stressed an essential link between Tibetans and China, with the Tibetans constituting a vital part of the Chinese people.[14] Presented as a truism, this proposition was not backed up by any sort of anthropological or biological argumentation. Its derivation from the writings of Sun Yat-sen sufficed to legitimate it.

The fact is, such positioning did not add much to the issue or the situation, because Tibet's de facto status (effectively independent) simply could not be challenged in any practical way. Instability and war in China left the Republican governments incapable of asserting their rule over Tibet while Britain, the only other outside power with considerable interest in the question, was content to leave things in limbo, with Tibet void of any threatening forces. Britain continued to pay lip service to the notion of China having rights to a sort of impotent "suzerainty" over Tibet, but the very vagueness of that term allowed for it to be left undefined, unspecified, and ultimately easily ignored.[15]

The might of the armed forces of the People's Republic of China, which had weathered years of war, changed everything. With the establishment of the People's Republic, China had a government that, for the first time since the collapse of the Qing, marshaled both the capability and the determination to assert its domination over Tibet. For the leadership of the PRC—particularly its intellectual cadre—the vagaries of random conquests and submissions in the past no longer sufficed in making sense of history; in the environment of dialectical materialistic historiography, Tibet's inclusion within the Chinese state was now something to be asserted, proven, and justified scientifically. The ideological imperative obliged the PRC to deal more specifically with the nature of Tibet's historical inclusion within the Chinese state. Out of this milieu eventually

Tibet's inclusion within the Chinese state was now something to be asserted, proven, and justified scientifically

evolved the interpretation that has been in place for several decades now: the affirmation that Tibet became an integral part of China during the period of the Mongol Empire when the Mongol rulers of China united Tibet and China.

China's currently constructed case has evolved partly in response to sporadic necessity; it did not appear in its present form until some time after the founding of the PRC. Only some years later, when international attention was focused on the Tibet question, did the Chinese position become more refined. Official pronouncements at the time of Tibet's incorporation into the PRC in 1951 noted that Tibet had been a part of China for centuries but were otherwise unspecific about the details.[16] Over the course of the 1950s, however, more emphasis was placed on constructing a clearer historical narrative.

The inherited opinions that Chinese commentators of the Republican period bequeathed to the new People's Republic held that Tibet's place within China's borders had been solidified during the Qing. The basis for such judgments was something of an anathema to the new state, however, for the common considered opinion of these writers was that Tibet during the Qing had become a vassal state of the empire. It goes without saying that imperial possession and domination could hardly be adduced to support a territorial claim by a state predicating its legitimacy on Scientific Socialism and dedicated to the anti-imperialist struggle. Nevertheless, the colonial paradigm is what Republican-era writers were using in describing Tibet's place in the Chinese state; indeed, their language left no room for ambiguity. Typically, one reads,

> Thus, in both the 57th and 58th years of the Qianlong period (1792 and 1793), the relationship between China and Tibet was radically reformed. China's sovereignty over Tibet was firmly established and afterwards implemented in practical terms.
>
> From the time of the above-mentioned radical reform Tibet was purely reduced to a vassal state of China's. To China belonged not only suzerain rights over Tibet, but sovereign rights as well.[17]

And also,

> From this [i.e., the reforms of 1793], the actions and protocol pertaining to the amban stationed in Tibet began to be equal in status to those of the Dalai and Panchen and they started to have special

> powers in ruling Tibet. From this time on Tibet was firmly established as China's vassal.[18]

These sorts of formulations simply did not stand up to the ideological requirements of the new regime, with its avowedly anti-colonial identity. Thus, one finds the imperial associations jettisoned in comments on Tibet coming from the new People's Republic. It appears, however, that the conclusion that Tibet had become part of China during the Qing was not at first problematic. In 1953, one of China's better-known writers on Tibet, Huang Fensheng 黄奮生, preserved this basic chronological element in his account of Tibet's history:

> In the 57th year of the Qianlong period (1792), following the dispatch of troops to put down the Gurkha incursion into Tibet and the subsequent military victory, the so-called "Regulations for Resolving Tibetan (Matters)" were promulgated. They established the equal rank of the *amban* with the Dalai and Panchen, and his direct authority to control political, military, religious, financial, communications, and transportation matters. Tibet at that point became wholly a part of China's territory.[19]

The incorporation of Tibet into the PRC in 1951 was in part made easier by the fact that the Republic of China had been quite vocal when opportunities presented themselves in asserting that Tibet was part of China. As a result, the status of Tibet was not at issue in the conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists and was not, therefore, an issue on which the supporters of one side or the other needed to take stands. It was only the development of Tibetan resistance and the outbreak of open revolt that brought the question of Tibet's status to international attention. Particularly in the years following 1959, the Tibetan revolt and the flight of the Dalai Lama cast the Tibetan situation in such a way that international sympathy with Tibetan aspirations for self-determination were broader than they have been since. Chiang Kai-shek even issued a pronouncement from Taiwan on March 26, 1959, specifically stating that after the ultimate defeat of communism on the Chinese mainland the Republic of China would be willing to allow the Tibetans the right of self-determination,[20] something that Republican China would never have conceded while in power on the mainland. That right was recognized by the United Nations (UN) in a resolution on Tibet in 1961, perhaps the high point of international support for Tibetan independence. Today, no

country advocates that position, nor does the Dalai Lama.

The events of 1959, in which the Tibet issue was actively discussed and considered by the international community, ultimately resulting in its being taken up by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the fall, brought forth a more formal and forceful statement of the PRC's position. In May 1959, only two months after the outbreak of fighting in Lhasa, and as a clear counterweight to all of the international attention then being accorded the Tibet issue, the Chinese government presented its case on Tibet in a well-known volume, *Concerning the Question of Tibet*. Within that volume the narrative of Tibetan history approached its current form. *Concerning the Question of Tibet* states clearly that "[t]he historical record proves that Tibet, during its long history, has never been an independent country, but a part of China."[21] Indeed, within its pages the Tibetan imperial state of the seventh to the ninth centuries—one of the great Eurasian powers of its time—is effectively presented as subject to China, and a number of elements relating to imperial Tibet's relationship with Tang China are adduced to support this position. It is implied quite clearly that Tibetan emperors had to have their titles confirmed by Tang China in order to be legitimate rulers; the Sino-Tibetan treaty of 821–822 is cited in its inscribed form as a monument to the unity between Tibet and China; and the Tibetan emperor Khri-gtsug lde-btsan is pointedly quoted as asserting that Tibet and Tang China constituted one family.[22] Still, the book also states that, following a long period of fragmentation,

> [t]he chaos in Tibet was brought to an end and unity was achieved when Mongko, Emperor Hsien Tsung of the Yuan dynasty, sent an armed force to Tibet in 1253. Tibet was then incorporated into the Yuan Empire and it has been a part of the territory of China ever since.[23]

In essence then, China's response to international concern over Tibet in 1959 elicited a new, firm formulation of the stages of Sino-Tibetan relations. In the first stage, from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, Tibet was subject to China. In the second, from the thirteenth century on, Tibet was and continues to be a part of China. This basic notion, that Tibet became an integral part of China during the Yuan period (1271–1368) has remained a tenet of Chinese historiography ever since. As now structured, the narrative has Tibetans and Chinese growing together from the Tang period (618–907) onward, with Tibet becoming an integral part

of China during the era of Mongol rule—a status it has maintained until the present.

To shore up this position, China began publishing a growing number of books and articles supporting it from the early 1980s on.[24] The documentary collections mentioned earlier have been particularly important in polemics, for they have helped provide a much more detailed description of Tibet's historical place within China than anything previously proposed by the PRC.

The Prevailing Chinese View of Tibet's Historical Status

The contemporary description of Tibet's assimilation into China as an integral part of the country is now part of a fairly coherent narrative. Briefly put, the Yuan-era incorporation of Tibet into China was attended by the creation of several state bureaus and offices under the Yuan for the purpose of ruling Tibet. Most prominently are the Zongzhiyuan 總制院, later renamed the Xuanzhengyuan 宣政院, which dealt with Tibetan and Buddhist affairs, as well as three subordinate pacification offices (*xuanwei shisi* 宣慰使司) that dealt with the military and civil administration of Tibetan areas. The most important Tibetan figure mentioned in the literature on the subject is of course the Sa-skya-pa cleric 'Phags-pa (in Chinese, Basiba 八思巴; 1235–80), the nephew of Sa-skya paṇḍita Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251). 'Phags-pa served as preceptor to the Mongol emperor Qubilai Qaɣan and was awarded appropriate titles: first, state preceptor (*guoshi* 國師), and then, imperial preceptor (*dishi* 帝師). Yuan sources mention a number of titles that were bestowed on other Tibetans and give an account of the administrative districts into which Tibet was divided as part of Yuan administration, specifically the three large districts constituting the greater area of the Tibetan Plateau termed *chol-kha* (<Mong. *čölge*) and the overlapping thirteen myriarchies (Ch. *wanhufu* 萬戶府; Tib. *khri-skor*). On certain occasions when trouble erupted Yuan forces entered Tibet and acted in support of Yuan-Sa-skya interests. All of this figures in various modern Chinese accounts of Tibet under the Yuan.

As described in these accounts, the Yuan-Ming transition had no effect on China's sovereignty over Tibet. The new dynasty continued to rule Tibet much as the Yuan had, with certain crucial changes. To be sure, Chinese accounts often emphasize the looser administration employed in Tibet, as compared to that in China proper, but Tibet, they say, was unambiguously ruled by the Ming court as a part of China. Under the Ming a wider group

of Tibetan clerics received titles and honors from the court; these titles are presented as yet one more sign of Ming authority over Tibet. The Ming granted titles not only to clerics but also to a variety of important Tibetan lay figures as well. The Ming titles differed somewhat from those granted by the Yuan; the title imperial preceptor was not used, but a number of Tibetans were accorded the title *dharmarājā* (Ch. *fawang* 法王; Tib. *chos-rgyal*) by the court, while others received lesser titles. This tactic allowed the Ming to make use of Tibetan Buddhism in its administration of Tibet, much as the Yuan did. At the same time, there was, especially during the early Ming, an important trade that brought Tibetan horses to the Chinese interior in exchange for tea and other goods. The Ming also implemented and regulated a system of tribute through which the court maintained links with a variety of Tibetan figures.

the Yuan-Ming transition had no effect on China's sovereignty over Tibet

In addition to the titles presented by the Ming court to various Tibetan figures, Chinese writers also take note of certain offices established to deal with Tibet and Tibetan affairs. Some Chinese writers point out that during the Ming dynasty a commandery was established in Hezhou to administer all of Tibet; it was later reorganized into two offices but continued to be the center of Ming administrative authority over Tibet. The invitation to the important Dge-lugs-pa leader Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa to visit court, and the subsequent honors accorded Shakyā ye-shes, the disciple who came to court in his stead, are also adduced as evidence of Tibet's place as a part of China during the Ming period. Following from this, Chinese writers have taken pains to point out that the Dalai Lamas began to receive Chinese titles from the Ming court.[25]

As with the Yuan-Ming transition, so too the Ming-Qing transition is presented as an event that in no way disturbed Tibet's position as a part of China. The fifth Dalai Lama quickly established links with the new dynasty, and in turn he was duly recognized by the Qing in much the same way that Tibetans during the Ming were conferred with legitimacy through the titles and honors accorded them by the court. As a result, China asserts a firm degree of continuity in Tibet's place within the Chinese state. It has been claimed that only when the Qing recognized the title "Dalai Lama" did the bearer acquire any legitimate political authority.[26]

The international position and aspirations of the Qing dynasty and its Manchu rulers differed considerably from those of the Ming. As aspiring

lords of a vast inner Asian empire, the Qing rulers actively expanded their authority and role in the region. Inasmuch as China's narrative of Tibetan history asserts no break in Chinese sovereignty from Ming to Qing, the changes in Qing relations and dealings with Tibet are seen as developments within that sovereign relationship. Indeed, the ability of the Qing court to undertake the steps it took in Tibet are simply manifestations of that sovereignty from the outset, not, as pre-PRC Chinese writers were wont to observe, steps in its development. Thus, as far as PRC observers are concerned, the various elements of Qing armies entering Tibet, Qing officials (the well-known *amban*) being stationed there, the associated calibrations in the duties of those officials, the size of the Qing garrison, etc., simply reflect the Chinese central government's normal revisions of its policies for a region that had been part of the Chinese state for centuries.[27]

There is naturally far more information available about the Qing role in Tibet, given its chronological proximity to our times, than about preceding dynasties; consequently, Chinese writers and scholars can describe Tibet's place within Qing dynasty China in detail. Thus, we can find Tibet's status described extensively with regard to the political use of Tibetan Buddhism and the links between Tibetan monks and the Qing court, as well as with regard to the various administrative measures implemented for Tibet.

Due attention is given to the 29 articles that comprised the "Regulations for Resolving Tibetan Matters" mentioned earlier. Promulgated by the Qing in the aftermath of the Gurkha war, these articles dealt with a number of issues, including the elevation of the *amban* to a level equal to that of Chinese provincial governors and the resultant interdiction against the Dalai Lama's having direct relations with the emperor. In effect the *amban* became the required intermediaries between the Tibetan government and the court. All of these measures are, again, presented as further indications of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. In recent years the specific article that imposed the court's designated method for choosing and recognizing the Dalai Lamas, Panchen Lamas, and other important incarnate lamas in Tibet has received particular attention. The court decreed that a "Golden Urn" was to be used in those cases, with the names of the various possible candidates for recognition as the incarnate lama being sought written down on wooden lots, one of which was to be drawn from the urn. The controversy over the most recent selection of a

Panchen Lama has led China to publish a number of pieces defending this means of recognizing such incarnate lamas as the only legitimate means of doing so.[28]

Although the effectiveness of Chinese rule over Tibet varied as imperialist encroachment increasingly enfeebled the Qing state, China's claim to Tibet, as Chinese writers note, never diminished. To the extent that any impetus for Tibetan independence existed at this time, it is said to have originated with imperialist powers, primarily Britain, but also tsarist Russia. While these imperialist nations were foisting "unequal treaties" on China to advance their colonialist ambitions, they were using similar legalistic cover to mask their intentions of separating Tibet from China. A series of treaties and agreements that were forced on China or negotiated between Britain and Russia were designed to weaken Chinese rule over Tibet.[29] The most blatant step in this regard, however, was the British march on Lhasa in 1903–4. The Tibetan defeat produced a treaty convention between Britain and Tibet that was subsequently renegotiated between Britain and the Qing. These treaties included the common humiliating elements of foreign occupation of Chinese territory (the Chumbi Valley in Tibet) and an indemnity, originally imposed on Tibet but later, in the renegotiation with the Qing, shouldered by China.

Within the general narrative of Tibetan history prevalent in the PRC, the fall of the Qing did not affect the status of Tibet. The Republic of China, which was proclaimed at the time, retained sovereignty over all the realms of the former imperial dynasty and in no way relinquished any claim to Tibet. Nevertheless, Chinese writers note, the Republican period was one in which there were distinct disagreements between the Tibetan government and the Chinese central government, differences that were exacerbated by British machinations aimed at detaching Tibet from China. Still, there were patriotic elements within the Tibetan government, including both the thirteenth Dalai Lama and the ninth Panchen Lama, who were concerned about the unity of China. The Chinese central government several times sent officials to meet and discuss the relationship between itself and the Tibetan local government. Indeed, the Dalai Lama indicated that he hoped to improve those relations.[30] However there were some factions in the Tibetan local government who were swayed by the British and who, up until the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, were convinced that they could separate Tibet from China. These dreams proved empty and Tibet was finally reunited with China in 1951.[31]

The Evolution of the Tibetan Position

What constitutes the Tibetan narrative of Sino-Tibetan relations is, frankly, far less detailed, though also less homogeneous than the Chinese narrative, given that there has not been a highly centralized effort in Tibetan exile society to delineate the details of Tibet's relationship to China. Indeed, even something as basic as the point in time at which Tibet finally fell under PRC domination has differed in various accounts. Many of the seams still show in the case that Tibetans in exile have constructed for Tibetan independence—as they do with the Chinese case.

the point in time at which Tibet finally fell under PRC domination has differed in various accounts

Much of the Tibetan advocacy on the subject of Tibet's historical status is striking, both for the preponderance of English-language source materials used as the basis for its arguments, and for the extent to which Tibetans dealing with the issue produce their arguments in English. This use of English is not universal, however; the large historical account of Tibet by Rtsis-dpon Zhwa-sgab-pa Dbang-phyug bde-ldan drew extensively on Tibetan historical sources, many quite rare at the time it was written. Yet even that account was originally published in a shortened English version years before the fuller two-volume Tibetan text appeared.[32] In most other writings on Tibet's status coming from the Tibetan side, the predominance of English is a product of location—the happenstance of exile in India, where English is the established language of modern scholarship and research. It has meant, however, that Tibetan source materials form a more meager part of the evidentiary case made by Tibetan exiles. In comparison, Chinese writers make ample use of Chinese source materials in their assertions. (They make use of Tibetan sources as well, albeit often in translation.)

This lack of Tibetan-language sources reflects itself in the tenor of the discussion on the Tibetan side. Whereas present-day Chinese writers evince a desire to proffer a case that has the air of scientific exactitude in terms of dates and events, striving, for example, to place Tibet's incorporation into China in the Yuan period, the Tibetan view has often seemed unclear and centered around less-tangible notions. There is no small amount of irony attached to this, for the Tibetan delegation to the Simla conference of 1913–14 is well known for having attended armed with substantive Tibetan literary and archival evidence concerning both Tibet's status and its boundaries.

In subsequent years, however, a vagueness set in, with regard to both delineating Tibet's status internationally and structuring its dealings with pre-1949 China. A recurring element that is still an important part of the case Tibetans have been making is what is conventionally termed in English the "priest-patron" relationship (in Tibetan, *mchod-yon*). As we will see, for many Tibetan writers the entire relationship of Tibet to China hinges on this concept, one so specific to the Tibetan Buddhist world, so they say, that it is difficult to relate it to Western notions of sovereign authority.

As just noted, the Tibetan delegation came to Simla in 1913–14 with a researched statement about the extent of Tibet's territories and frontiers. There was no hesitancy in their assertions that Tibet was a country separate from China. As to whether it had been a vassal state or not under the Qing, the Tibetan representative, in a statement dated October 10, 1913, contended that "Tibet and China have never been under each other and will never associate with each other in [the] future."[33] The Chinese representative responded with his own statement on October 30, proposing a settlement that would require agreement "that Tibet forms an integral part of the territory of Republic of China."[34] The meaning of "integral part" is somewhat colored by the concessions China was willing to make: Tibet would not be converted into a Chinese province and would conduct its foreign and military affairs under Chinese guidance.[35]

In the Tibetan statement one also finds reference to the priest-patron relationship as the unique basis for historical relations between Tibet and China:

> The relations between the Manchu Emperor and the Protector, Dalai Lama the fifth, became like that of the disciple towards the teacher. The sole aim of the then Government of China being to earn merits for this and the next life, they helped and honoured the successive Dalai Lamas and treated the monks of all the monasteries with respect. Thus friendship united the two countries like the members of the same family. The Tibetans took no notice of their boundary with China for they thought that the actions of the latter were all meant for the good of Tibet.[36]

This concept, that Tibet's ties to the Qing were essentially of a priest-patron nature, is alluded to in the desperate cable sent by the Tibetan government to the United Nations on November 11, 1950, following the entry of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) into the area of the

Tibetan Plateau under the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama's government:

> The Chinese, however, in their natural urge for expansion, have wholly misconstrued the significance of the time of friendship and inter-dependence that existed between China and Tibet as between neighbours. To them China was suzerain and Tibet a vassal State. It is this which first aroused legitimate apprehension in the mind of Tibet regarding China's designs on its independent status.[37]

For centuries the priest-patron relationship has been a real institution in Tibetan history, linking secular rulers with Tibetan hierarchs.[38] But in some iterations, such as those just cited, the argument essentially turns on an acceptance of the position that Tibet's relationship to the dynastic states that ruled China was not one of sovereign power ruling over Tibet's territory and people, but rather a simple relationship between emperors and the Tibetan lamas who guided and instructed them. During China's Republican period, when the Dalai Lama's government did exercise independent rule and authority over Tibet, the Dalai Lama on at least one occasion proposed to the Chinese government that the priest-patron relationship be the basis for resolving the Tibet issue.[39]

The Tibetan government did not otherwise pay much attention to the historical case for Tibet's independence, nor did it expend much energy in asserting it in any detail, until the crisis of 1950. Prior to that time, the Tibetan government had made some demonstrations of the practical reality of Tibetan independence, but a structured, historically-grounded argument beyond the position presented at the Simla conference was not put forward. With Tibetan acquiescence to the Seventeen-Point Agreement of 1951, Tibet formally became part of the People's Republic of China and the question of its historical status essentially fell dormant.

Only with the events of 1959 did Tibetans return to putting together a historical defense of Tibet's status as an independent state. As already noted, due in part to the circumstances of exile, that defense is multifarious, at times inconsistent, and often more reflective of Western ideas and accounts of Tibet than of indigenous Tibetan evidence and documents.

After 1959, when the Dalai Lama began to constitute a government in exile, there was an urgent need to make an approach to the UN. On September 9, 1959, the Dalai Lama addressed a letter to the UN secretary-general, laying out an argument for Tibetan independence:

> I and my Government wish to emphasize that Tibet was a sovereign

> state at the time when her territorial integrity was violated by the Chinese Armies in 1950. In support of this contention the Government of Tibet urge the following:
>
> First, no power or authority was exercised by the Government of China in or over Tibet since the Declaration of Independence by the 13th Dalai Lama in 1912.[40]

All other points made in the letter also relate to events of the twentieth century, such as Tibet's neutrality in World War II and the contention that the ability of Tibetan delegates to travel to various countries on Tibetan passports in the 1940s constituted recognition of Tibet's sovereign status.[41] The lack of reference to any Tibetan documents is indicative of the fact that the Tibetan government, in approaching the UN after 1959, sought out and worked with several non-Tibetan advisers and made much use of the work of the International Commission of Jurists, which published its first report on Tibet in 1959.[42]

With the suppression of the Tibetan uprising of 1959, contact between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's government, now a Tibetan government-in-exile, effectively ceased. The historical status of Tibet was dealt with by the Tibetan government as part of its international representation, more or less along the lines of argumentation already described. There was no real engagement with Chinese arguments for some decades; Tibetan pronouncements on the case for Tibetan independence reflected an emphasis on twentieth-century events, as already mentioned, or on evidence from Western sources. Hugh Richardson, who had helped the Tibetans in their dealings with the UN after 1959, produced a history of Tibet that stressed the case along similar lines. Moreover, he was among those who helped interpret the priest-patron relationship for Western readers in a way that came to be repeated and echoed in later writings. Stating that this was a "purely Central Asian concept," he noted,

Tibetan pronouncements on the case for Tibetan independence reflected an emphasis on twentieth-century events

> It is an elastic and flexible idea and not to be rendered in the cut-and-dried terms of modern western politics. There is in it no precise definition of the supremacy of one or the subordination of the other; and the practical meaning of the relationship can only be interpreted in the light of the facts of the moment.[43]

In the same year that Richardson's history appeared, the Dalai Lama published an English-language autobiography that also lamented the inability of Western lexicons to adequately reflect the nature of this relationship:

> Suzerainty is a vague and ancient term. Perhaps it was the nearest western political term to describe the relations between Tibet and China from 1720 to 1890; but still, it was very inaccurate, and the use of it has misled whole generations of western statesmen. It did not take into account the reciprocal spiritual relationship, or recognize that the relationship was a personal matter between the Dalai Lamas and the Manchu Emperors. There are many such ancient eastern relationships which cannot be described in ready-made western political terms.[44]

Rtsis-dpon Zhwa-sgab-pa—whose history of Tibet drew from a wide range of Tibetan sources—also reinforced the Tibetan position that the priest-patron relationship was something so specific to Tibet that its significance was close to impossible for Westerners to appreciate. His original text in Tibetan is worth quoting on this subject:

> Taking together the two edicts, one presented by [the Mongol prince] Godan Qan to Sa-skya paṇḍita, and one by Qubilai Qan to 'Phags-pa rin-po-che, the first resembles one given by a lord to a subject, while the latter is like one offered by a patron to a lama. That is exactly how we Eastern peoples would consider it. The lama acts and teaches in a way that spreads the doctrines of the dharma and brings peace to beings. The patron must attend to the financial requisites so that this may continue in the long term. Thus we can describe the Priest-Patron relationship between Tibet and Mongolia as having existed along these lines. However, this cannot be explained according to Western forms of political behavior. If Westerners seriously analyze the account above [i.e., the author's account of the relationship between 'Phags-pa and Qubilai], then the Qan's professing that he would not go against the wishes of 'Phags-pa rin-po-che was an explicit recognition that 'Phags-pa was the highest power in Tibet. Similarly, the manner in which the Qan requested the dharma of him, showed him respect, requested his teachings when he conquered Southern China, offered him a seal and high titles, accompanied him enroute to A-mdo, and carried out a [census] investigation in Tibet because it was the command of the lama; all reveal not just that the two countries engaged in mutual cooperation

> and showed the highest respect to each other, but also that neither one was subordinate to the other. Thus, on the basis of this Priest-Patron relationship, [we see that] up through the end of the Qing or Manchu era in 1911, the Iron-Pig Year of the 15th *rab-byung*, there existed between Tibet and China activities commensurate with a mutual Priest-Patron relationship as described above.[45]

Almost none of those who approached the question of Tibet's status from the Tibetan side dealt with the sort of institutional issues—the structures of Qing authority in Tibet, the rules and offices for dealing with Tibet that pertained in earlier dynasties—that are a noticeable part of Chinese studies and polemics. In effect, taking their lead from Zhwa-sgab-pa, the consensus developed that the priest-patron relationship was the primary institutional structure for understanding the historical relationship between Tibet and China. In the 1980s, the Tibetan government-in-exile turned to a longtime Tibet supporter, Michael C. van Walt van Praag, a lawyer with a degree in international law, to provide a fundamental legal case for Tibet, one that also took into account Tibet's historical relations with China. The book he eventually produced, *The Status of Tibet*, was strongly supported by the Tibetan government-in-exile (which had it translated into Tibetan), and van Walt became the exile government's adviser on relevant legal issues.[46] As such, his book, as much as anything else, effectively came to represent the official Tibetan exile position.

The Status of Tibet gave great weight, not surprisingly, to the need to understand that status through the lens of the priest-patron relationship, referred to throughout as "*Chö-yön*" (Tib. *mchod-yon*). We see once more in this account an insistence that the relationship could not be adequately contained within conventional international legal terminology. According to van Walt,

> This relationship formed the basis for the future unique relation not only between the Yuan Emperors and the Tibetan Sakya Lamas but also, in more recent history, between the Manchu Emperors and the Dalai Lamas.[47]
>
> … [T]he religious *Chö-yön* relationship cannot be categorized or defined adequately in current international legal terms and must be regarded as a *sui generis* relationship. …[48]
>
> The conclusion that must be reached, therefore, is that Manchu-Tibetan relations in the eighteenth century, while formally and *solely*

> [emphasis added] based on the *Chö-yön* relationship, included features primarily characteristic of protectorate arrangements—though they were often conceived in terms of tributary relations by the Qing court. As the formal source of government remained in Tibet; as Tibet was not conquered or annexed by the Emperor but, rather, was taken under his protection; and as the nature of Manchu interference in Tibetan affairs, specifically its foreign affairs, did not differ from that characteristic of protectorate relationships and the extent of actual interference was limited and by no means continuous, the State of Tibet never ceased to exist. The exercise of sovereignty by the Tibetans was restricted by the Manchu involvement in the affairs of Tibet, but that did not result in the extinction of the independent State, which continued to possess the essential attributes of statehood.[49]

The basic Tibetan position on the historical status of Tibet that is laid out here has pretty much been maintained intact by Tibetans in exile. Two years before the publication of *The Status of Tibet*, van Walt authored a pamphlet for the Tibetan government-in-exile that put it rather succinctly at the outset: "Tibet existed as an independent state for almost two thousand years before the communist Chinese troops invaded and occupied the country."[50] The historical argument advanced by many Tibetans in exile continues to maintain that Tibet had always been independent, until China marched in in the middle of the twentieth century. A 1999 study of Tibet's relations with the Qing published by the Department of Security of the Tibetan government-in-exile concluded, "The essence of an analysis of the actual relationship between Tibet and the Manchus finds that Tibet did not belong to the Manchus and the situation in Tibet was not one of actual Manchu administration."[51]

One of the only institutional innovations of the Qing that is really addressed by Tibetan writers and commentators has been the recognition of incarnations through a system of drawing lots from the Golden Urn, which was imposed as part of the 1793 measures instituted to reform Tibetan affairs. It is effectively dismissed, with Zhwa-sgab-pa saying that in choosing the Dalai Lamas in the following decades it was either not used, or a pretense was made of having used it.[52] Van Walt, in turn, maintains that the edict ordering the use of the Golden Urn was virtually without effect.[53]

In essence, then, Tibetan exile writers generally do not deal with the institutional structures or, indeed, the institutional records of the dynastic states created in China. Thus, they describe Tibet's relations with the

Mongols and with the Yuan court from the sole perspective of the Sa-skya-pa sect's interactions with Mongol rulers. Tibetan dealings with the succeeding Ming dynasty are given only glancing notice at best. Early Qing relations with Tibet are described in the manner just recounted—i.e., from the standpoint of the priest-patron relationship, exemplified largely by Manchu interest in the Dalai Lamas.

The one minor exception to the general view of Sino-Tibetan relations is represented by the small booklet on the subject authored by Tashi Tsering and published in 1988 by the Department of Information and International Relations of the Tibetan government-in-exile. Tashi Tsering acknowledges the reality of the Mongol occupation of Tibet, seeing it as commensurate with the situation that prevailed in other countries under Mongol domination. But he states that the Mongols did not make Tibet a part of China proper. He also elaborates on the nature of Ming-Tibetan relations, noting that there was no Ming domination over Tibet. [54] He is also more nuanced than other Tibetan writers about the Qing:

> Thus while the Tibetans viewed the relationship with the Manchus as one of priest and patron, the Manchu viewed it as one of vassal and overlord. However it may be described, it was a weak and ceremonial relationship throughout its duration.[55]

The Prevailing Tibetan View of Tibet's Historical Status

Writings from the Tibetan side do indeed tend to emphasize the lack of effective Qing authority in Tibet, regardless of the actual administrative structures in place. They point to the inability of the Qing to effectively intervene in several crises, including the Younghusband expedition (the 1903-04 British march on Lhasa) and a variety of internal Tibetan political conflicts. In this and some other respects, the Tibetan narrative hews closely to the views of earlier British writers for whom the Qing hold on Tibet seemed tenuous and loomed largely as an impediment to legitimate British dealings with Tibet. Curzon's remarks, cited at the beginning of this paper, constitute the most well-known example of that point of view.

In addition, almost all who write from the Tibetan exile perspective adduce the thirteenth Dalai Lama's declaration of Tibet's independence from China, made in 1912, as yet one more item bolstering the case for Tibetan independence. They also place some stress on subsequent developments that they view as demonstrative of Tibet's independent status

over the next several decades. These include Tibet's contacts with several foreign countries and particularly the visits of Tibetan delegations to several countries in the aftermath of World War II, using Tibetan papers as their official travel documents.[56]

In the current Tibetan narrative, Tibet's independence was violated when China invaded Tibet in 1949. This date was fixed only over the course of the 1980s, however. Previously, China was said to have invaded Tibet in 1950, i.e., at the time the People's Liberation Army attacked across the line separating those parts of the Tibetan Plateau under the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama's government from the Tibetan territories that were under Chinese control as provinces or parts of provinces. Thus we find the Dalai Lama, in the letter he wrote to the UN secretary-general in 1959, stating that the territorial integrity of Tibet was violated in 1950. This was also the date that appeared in most commentaries on the Tibet issue. The Dalai Lama repeated this in his first autobiography ("from 1912 until the fateful year of 1950, Tibet enjoyed complete de facto independence of any other nation"[57]) and also in another letter to the secretary-general in 1960: "Between 1912 and 1950 there was not even a semblance of Chinese authority in Tibet. … As the head of the Tibetan Government I say that what happened on October 10, 1950 was a flagrant act of aggression on the part of China against my country."[58] This date for the PLA's invasion of Tibet came to be generally accepted outside the PRC, though here and there (as can be seen below) the date of 1959 has even been given, implying that it was the Chinese suppression of the Tibetan revolt and abolition of the Dalai Lama's government that constituted the real break with Tibet's earlier status.

In the current Tibetan narrative, Tibet's independence was violated when China invaded Tibet in 1949.

Assertions and the Historical Record

How accurate are the claims that have been used to build the core cases that have been made about the status of Tibet? It should already be obvious that many of these claims have far shorter pedigrees, so to speak, than many might imagine simply from looking at the most recent elucidations of the cases for Tibet's status as either a part of China or an independent state. They are relatively recent constructs. This is not to dismiss them out of hand, but it imposes the task, where possible, of measuring these claims

and views against extant source materials and earlier interpretations of Tibet's relationship to China.

At the outset we have interpretations that have formed over the course of the last century but that purport to present a view that developed much earlier. We can start most conveniently with the basic premise in the Chinese argument: the notion that Tibet became an integral part of China during the period of Mongol rule. What is most striking is that one does not find this interpretation at all in the centuries of Chinese historiography that lay between the Yuan period and the establishment of the PRC. This is not to deny the reality of Mongol domination of Tibet, but that domination is something quite different from Tibet's being a part of China.

Official Chinese historiography has recorded, over the course of several dynasties, the shape of China. The geographic range of the state is delineated quite clearly in the chapters on geography (*dilizhi* 地理志) in the respective official dynastic histories. And Tibet is simply not found within the Chinese state during the Yuan.[59] As a result, there is something quite interesting about assertions regarding Tibet's incorporation into Yuan China: there is no agreement as to when this happened. The 1992 white paper published by the Information Office of the State Council of the PRC dated it to after the establishment of the Yuan central government (the same document dates the establishment of centralized Yuan rule to 1279).[60] A volume brought out under the auspices of the Propaganda Department of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee (*Xizang zizhiqu dangwei xuanchuanbu* 西藏自治区党委宣传部) put it somewhat differently:

Tibet is simply not found within the Chinese state during the Yuan

> In 1271 the Mongol Qanate designated Yuan as the title of their state and established a central political authority for the great unity of all of China's regions and nationalities. The Tibet region became an administrative area under the direct control of the central government of China's Yuan Dynasty.[61]

And in another study of Tibet's history we read,

> The implementation of Yuan rule and administration of Tibet started approximately in the mid-thirteenth century. In 1264 Qubilai moved his capital to Beijing and in the same year established the Zongzhiyuan within the central government. The full name of the Zongzhiyuan is the

> Shijiao Zongzhiyuan ("Supreme Control Commission for Buddhism") and its establishment was wholly a product of the unique ingenuity of the Mongol rulers. It was an office with a double function: 1) to handle the responsibility for managing Buddhist affairs for the whole country, including the Han regions; and 2) to directly govern the Tibetan nationality areas.[62]

There is a degree of vagueness in many Chinese comments on the question of Tibet's incorporation into China during the Yuan, and indeed the whole question of Mongol rule over Tibet is complex. As one study of Tibet's status says, "a general outline of the actual rule and full administration of the Tibetan area by the central authority of the Yuan Dynasty involves historical facts that are too numerous to mention and cannot be set out here one by one."[63] As a result, most Chinese sources present a narrative of only the basic events in the evolution of Tibet's domination by the Mongols and by the Yuan dynasty. But the fact remains that being subject to the Yuan (as Tibet indeed was) is not ipso facto the same thing as being a part of China. The analyses that have come out of the PRC are uniform in not entertaining the possibility that the Yuan was an empire with constituent elements that were not integral parts of China. In contrast, the interpretations of Yuan history produced outside China overwhelmingly view the situation as one of a Mongol Empire; Qubilai Qaγan, for instance, clearly presented himself as the ruler of such. Within this context, then, there is no formal act or incident that appended Tibet to the Chinese portion of the empire. And when the Yuan collapsed and the Ming wrote the previous dynasty's history, the official geographical description of the Yuan naturally omitted Tibet as Chinese territory.

Several works produced in China do, however, engage explicitly with the positions of Zhwa-sgab-pa and van Walt.[64] And here they are on firmer ground, for the priest-patron relationship, invoked as if to deny a relationship of political subordination, presents less than a full picture of Tibet's historical relationship with China. The priest-patron relationship has been a feature of Tibetan political and religious life for centuries. It has existed under a variety of circumstances that linked Tibetan clerics with both internal and external rulers and powers. The priest-patron relationship has been present during periods in which Tibet was subordinate to secular powers acting as religious patrons (e.g., Qubilai Qaγan), as well as during periods in which those powers had no real political authority in Tibet—indeed, such was the case with the dynasty that succeeded the Yuan, the

Ming dynasty.

The general opinion evinced in most modern Chinese accounts of Tibet during the Ming is, as already mentioned, that the Ming simply maintained the system that had been established by the Yuan for the administration of Tibet with some modifications. In part this meant the granting of titles to important Tibetan figures, so as to maintain a hierarchical system of ranking. In addition, much as the Yuan had established various offices for administering Tibetan affairs, so too, Chinese commentators note, did the Ming establish offices for handling Tibetan affairs. The administration of Tibet under the Ming is described in one volume as follows:

> At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the Xi'an branch regional military commission was established at Hezhou to govern the Tibetan areas of the whole country. Afterwards this was changed and there were established a Mdo-khams branch regional military commission and an Dbus-Gtsang branch regional military commission, dividing up the administration of the Tibetan areas. … The Mdo-khams branch regional military commission was centered around Xining, in Qinghai, and governed the A-mdo Tibetan region. …The sphere of governing authority of the Dbus-Gtsang branch regional military commission encompassed the greater part of present-day Tibet.[65]

This description more or less reflects what is depicted in the relevant Chinese records, particularly the *Ming shilu*, in an entry for August 23, 1374.[66] In this entry there is an interesting passage recounting the elevation of a Chinese official, Wei Zheng 韋正,[67] from the position of commander (Ch. *zhihuishi* 指揮使) of the Hezhou 河州 guard to that of regional military commissioner (Ch. *duzhihuishi* 都指揮使). He was now the highest ranking official in Hezhou and, we are told, given general governing authority over Hezhou, Mdo-Khams, and Dbus-Gtsang—i.e., all of Tibet. The import of this is considerable, if one is to assume that the Ming dynasty continued to dominate Tibet as the Yuan had, for this makes Wei Zheng the most powerful political figure in Tibet at the beginning of the Ming, a proposition that is, on its face, farcical. Wei Zheng is wholly unknown in Tibetan historical literature. More to the point, the offices bearing the names of Mdo-Khams and Dbus-Gtsang were not established in Tibet proper but remained in the border regions around Hezhou and Xining 西寧. They were not in any way a part of the actual political power structure of Tibet.

Similarly exaggerated is the significance of the titles that were granted to Tibetans by the Ming. These titles (which have already been noted above) were honors that conveyed prestige and recognition, but they did not confer political authority. In point of fact, the grant of titles in China to foreigners was not unusual; it was a well-known tool of statecraft. But in the case of three Tibetan hierarchs who were accorded the title *fawang* or *dharmarājā*, Chinese commentators essentially present the bestowal of these titles as both a mark of Chinese sovereignty and a political measure by which the Ming exerted control over Tibetan Buddhism.[68] These three *fawang* were honored as such because they traveled to the Ming court, where they performed rites and conferred initiations upon the emperor (specifically, Ming Chengzu 明成祖 and Ming Xuanzong 明宣宗). Thus their prestige and positions were established well before they ever went to China. Lest there be any doubt about the authority of the Ming court in these matters, there is the aforementioned case of Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa, one of the most important figures of the period. Invited to the court of Chengzu, he simply refused to go and sent a disciple instead (who later became one of the three *fawang*).

These titles…were honors that conveyed prestige and recognition, but they did not confer political authority.

As for the lesser titles awarded Tibetans during the Ming, many of these were given to figures active along the Ming-Tibetan frontier. But others were awarded to figures inside Tibet who were still not subordinate to the Ming court. There is no indication at all in Tibetan sources—or in Chinese sources, for that matter—that any of those inside Tibet exerted power or acted on behalf of the Ming court. Bluntly put, there was no Ming political authority over Tibet—no ordinances, laws, taxes, etc., imposed inside Tibet by the Ming.

If the substantive significance of these Ming structures is misrepresented in Chinese writings, the Qing institution of the Golden Urn is not accorded its true import in Tibetan writings. As we have seen, the use of the urn was imposed in the wake of the Gurkha war with Tibet at the end of the eighteenth century. The Qing had slowly taken on an increasingly dominant role in Tibet, so much so that by the end of the eighteenth century the subordinate place of Tibet within the Qing Empire was beyond dispute. The memoirs of one of the Tibetan ministers involved in the Gurkha war and implicated in its escalation are telling. Summoned to Beijing for an

inquest, he makes clear in his own account the fact he was unambiguously a subject of the Qing emperor whom he describes as "the *dharmarājā*, lord of all below heaven and above earth the Mañjuśrī emperor.[69] It is simply not possible to chalk Qing-Tibetan relations up to a priest-patron relationship on a personal level with no element of political subordination.

The use of the Golden Urn is particularly contentious, because it represents the intrusion of Qing authority into the selection of important lamas, most prominently the Dalai Lamas. Nevertheless, it is clear from Tibetan sources that its use was required for some time, at least.[70] In the early nineteenth century, a survey of all contemporary incarnations was compiled that specified which ones had actually been selected by means of the Golden Urn.[71] The survey list makes it clear that the Golden Urn was not limited to the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. The fourteenth Karma-pa, Theg-mchog rdo-rje, is also noted as having been chosen through its use.[72] There can be little doubt that the Qing had the authority to impose the use of the Golden Urn. Nor can there be any doubt about the real authority in Tibetan affairs exerted by the offices and officials that the Qing posted in Tibet. It is of course true that for most of the nineteenth century Qing authority there was weak. But that authority was still acknowledged by the Dalai Lama's government until 1912, when the thirteenth Dalai Lama declared Tibet to be free of China.

It should be clear that much of what is claimed by both sides in the Tibet-China conflict comes down to rather recent constructions of history. Bearing this in mind, it may be useful to look further at some of these constructions within the context of the larger issues that they both respond to and reflect. A glance at four of the more obvious instances in which the historical record is at variance with current assertions ought to illustrate to some extent the factors at work. These have largely been examined above, but additional comments about them as they appear set against other issues of culture, politics, or identity should shed more light on the way in which they have become such considerable impediments to attempts at dealing with the issue of Tibet's status.

Integral Part of China or Vassal State?

Not only is the notion that Tibet has been an integral part of China since the Yuan dynasty a twentieth-century idea, into the 1950s the predominant view was that Tibet's relations with late imperial China were best described as those of a vassal, something quite opposite to an integral part of a country. As we have already seen, Chinese writers, well into the early years

of the PRC, saw the full implementation of Chinese sovereignty in Tibet coming only after the Gurkha war. This is starkly different from what has now become received wisdom in the PRC, namely that Tibet's place as an integral part of China dates to the Yuan. Moreover, even when speaking of the Qing period and Tibet's status under the Qing, the terms used by these earlier writers cannot be said to point to something "integral" to the Chinese state. Rather, they point to a Tibet that is a tributary or a dependency—i.e., something that cannot be called "integral." This is not to say that Tibet was not subject to the Qing or that the international community during the Qing period did not accept that fact. But the Qing state in its day was viewed as an empire, as indeed it was an empire. And the terms that we see being used to characterize Tibet within the Qing realms are terms that speak of a part of an empire, not an "integral" part of China. The Qing rulers maintained some very clear boundaries between their rule of China on the one hand and their rule of regions such as Tibet or Mongolia on the other. Indeed, both regions fell under the jurisdiction of the Lifanyuan 理藩院 (commonly translated as "Court of Colonial Affairs"), a bureau that also handled Qing relations with Russia into the nineteenth century. When Zhao Erfeng 趙爾豐, the last major Qing official dealing with Tibetan affairs, took up the military pacification of the eastern Sino-Tibetan borderlands, he described his enterprise there as a colonial one, comparable to those of the British, French, Japanese, and Americans in Asia and Africa.[73]

The terms used to describe Tibet under the Qing (*fanbang* 藩邦, *fanshu* 藩屬, etc.) are generally translated as "vassal state" or something similar.[74] A recent article maintains that *fanshu* are not like other tribute-paying regions in that the former fall under the full sovereign administration of China,[75] but that is not the point; though an imperial power can exercise full sovereign rule over a subject country, this in itself does not make that country an inalienable or integral part of the imperial country.

Setting aside the issue of *fanshu*, however, it is still manifestly clear that Chinese writers have come to view pre-eighteenth-century Tibet as firmly under Chinese sovereignty only during the last five decades. This change has been part of a larger enterprise of defining China and the Chinese people in a new way, one in which elements of past imperial domination have been suppressed and previously subject peoples fitted into the category of "national minority." In the case of Tibet, where the historical memory encompasses a sense of nationhood and a knowledge

of a time when Tibetans presided over a Tibetan state, administered by a Tibetan bureaucracy using Tibetan-language administrative documents and tools, the persistence of tensions is not surprising. The category of "national minority" ultimately reduces Tibetans to a par with a variety of other groups, many numbering just tens of thousands or fewer, and having no similar national history or consciousness. Yet this definition of the Chinese nation has been created and successfully inculcated in the general population of the PRC. Now, regardless of past history, most Chinese do indeed feel that Tibet belongs to China and has been an inseparable part of the country since ancient times.

Chinese writers have come to view pre-eighteenth-century Tibet as firmly under Chinese sovereignty only during the last five decades

This cultural sense of what is rightly China's is also bound up with the notion that any attempt to separate Tibet from China is ultimately the result of foreign machinations or incitement derived from earlier imperialist policies that sought to divide up China. The sense of popular grievance this plays on has commonly been marshaled in books and essays pointing to the imperialist provenance of Tibetan independence.[76] Indeed, the Chinese response to non-Chinese writers and scholars who see Tibet as possessing a historical identity separate from China has been to tar them with the colonialist label. But the fact is, Tibet was historically not a part of China; rather, Tibet's subordinate relationship to the Qing is more aptly described with the feudal terminology of vassalage that Chinese writers previously used for it.

The Priest-Patron Relationship

The priest-patron relationship coexisted with Tibet's political subordination to the Yuan and the Qing. There is simply nothing to substantiate the notion that the priest-patron relationship excluded political domination. It existed, as we have seen, between Tibetan hierarchs and emperors of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, including periods in which the Ming and Qing did not exercise authority over Tibet. Nevertheless, it has become common for Tibetan exile commentators to see the relationship as uniquely personal and ideas of Tibet's subordination to Yuan or Ming emperors as a misunderstanding of that fact.

Here, too, we have a cultural notion at work as a national idea is defined anew. In this case the process is a complex one, involving in part Tibetan

interaction with the West and the assimilation of modern ideas about Tibet as an exceptional realm of a uniquely religious culture. One sees this idea developing through an increasing de-emphasis, among the exile leadership, on the "national" aspects of what had once been a movement for independence (and that, to be honest, remains as such among most Tibetan exiles and activists). At the higher levels of the Tibetan government-in-exile it has devolved into a movement for cultural preservation. As if taking a cue from Western fantasies of Tibet as the place wherein all is centered around spiritual pursuits, the Tibetan exile authorities are increasingly given to speaking of Tibet largely as a global religious and spiritual resource, for which independence as a nation is unimportant. The present exile prime minister, Samdhong Rinpoche, told the *New York Times* as much in July 2002.[77] As a result, one encounters an increasingly muddled view of the nature of Sino-Tibetan relations in some quarters of the Tibetan exile leadership. Against this background the impetus to make religion the overwhelming core of Tibet's identity—again, partially in response to non-Tibetan expectations—would seem to have fostered an inability in some quarters to understand the hard political facts of Tibet's ties with the Yuan and Qing courts.

There is simply nothing to substantiate the notion that the priest-patron relationship excluded political domination.

The Golden Urn

The Golden Urn was used to select Tibetan incarnations during the Qing, but its invocation in the recognition of contemporary incarnations is a selective response to political exigencies. In spite of exile interpretations to the contrary, the Golden Urn lottery was used in Tibet in the cases of a number of incarnations. But its revival as a present-day device cannot be seen as anything but cynical. The use of the Golden Urn was not constant by the late Qing, and it subsequently fell into disuse. It was, after all, a Qing device imposed on the Tibetan Buddhist authorities. One cannot but note, somewhat wryly, that after almost a century of rhetoric on the part of both the Republican and the Socialist governments of China depicting the policies of the Qing upper strata as divisive and oppressive toward the borderland or minority peoples, the PRC has chosen to resurrect this one particular Qing institution, specifically with regard to the recognition of the Panchen Lama, maintaining that it is absolutely necessary in choosing an incarnation. (It goes without saying that there has not been a rush

to restore any other Qing institutions across modern China.) But given what we know about the use of the Golden Urn, it is interesting to note that although the fourteenth Karma-pa was recognized through the use of the Golden Urn at the beginning of the nineteenth century, all reports of the recognition and enthronement of the seventeenth Karma-pa in 1992 indicate that this was not the case with him.[78] The revived use of the Golden Urn is meant to impart legitimacy to PRC control over the incarnation of high lamas by creating the perception of historical continuity, with a particular eye to PRC supervision of the recognition of the Dalai Lama's next incarnation. The use of the Golden Urn is one of the few elements of imperial dynastic rule that can be called on to reinforce the modern Chinese notion that China's central governments enjoyed primacy in Tibetan affairs from the Yuan period up to the present. The notion that Tibet somehow warrants the restoration of this element of Qing rule is best viewed as part of a larger struggle to bring history and historical precedent to bear on the legitimacy of PRC policies and rule in Tibet today.[79]

[the Golden Urn's] revival as a present-day device cannot be seen as anything but cynical

The Invasion Question, or What Constitutes Tibet?

Tibet was not invaded by China in 1949, nor were Tibetans ignorant of the name of their country. These last two points—purposely phrased so as to raise eyebrows—are connected once more with the attempt to define a specific vision of a nation. They are useful in pointing out the degree of ambiguity, contradiction, and even strained illogical invention that goes into such an enterprise.

The first point relates to the idea of what Tibet is, exactly. We have already noted that in 1950, when the PLA attacked across the frontier separating the territories under the Dalai Lama's jurisdiction from other parts of the Tibetan Plateau, the Tibetan government claimed that China had launched an invasion of Tibet. Only in the 1980s was it decided to set 1949 as the year of the invasion. The reason, very obviously, was to assert a political claim to all of the contiguous territories on the Tibetan Plateau inhabited by Tibetans. This elicits the natural question of why the Tibetan government did not make the claim of invasion in 1949. One is hard pressed to imagine Tibet's being invaded in 1949 while its population remained oblivious of the event. In fact, the territories involved (generally speaking, the Tibetan-inhabited regions outside the modern Tibet

Autonomous Region) had been removed by the Qing from the jurisdiction of the Tibetan government in the early eighteenth century. In the first half of the twentieth century, they had become parts of Chinese provinces (something the Qing had not done with them) and were generally under the domination of provincial warlords. The ties of culture, language, and religion between these areas and Lhasa remained largely unimpeded. Indeed, the present Dalai Lama and the previous Panchen Lama were both born in these regions. Thus, an accommodation with this situation of divided political regimes on the Tibetan Plateau was in place. Many people in the Tibetan government were largely ignorant of what the implications of this were in terms of modern nationalist aspirations. Clearly, it was the coming to terms with that sentiment in the aftermath of 1959 that disabused certain figures in the exile community of the viability of a Tibet with imprecise borders and status.

Essentially, the vagaries of the situation on the Tibetan Plateau before 1950 were such that the Tibetan government accommodated an arrangement with Chinese provincial powers in which much was informal and left unarticulated in official agreements. The Tibetan government had long been accustomed to this state of affairs and discretion was often part of it. Not that the Tibetan government had written off the eastern portions of the Tibetan Plateau: their status had been part of the brief brought by the Tibetan delegation at the Simla conference, and earlier decades had seen serious conflict there. But there was no urgent sense that Tibet had been invaded when, in 1949, civil and military officials of the PRC replaced the rulers in the area who had been part of the Chinese Republican presence there. So obtuse was the Tibetan government in those years about questions of sovereignty that it had even been able to persuade some in Lhasa that its signing of the Seventeen-Point Agreement in 1951 still left Tibet independent.[80] Thus there was no claim of a 1949 invasion until the 1980s, even though the backbone of the 1959 uprising comprised Tibetans from the very areas in question (those that lay outside the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama's government); certainly one cannot dispute their identity as Tibetans.

In due course the Tibetan government-in-exile began to backtrack in order to build a vision of Tibet that reflected the new sense of nationalism that grew out of the 1959 revolt and the years of exile that followed. Yet a pamphlet on Tibet's status published by the Dalai Lama's New Delhi office not long after the 1959 uprising gave 1950 as the date of the invasion.[81]

When reprinted in 1987, the date had been changed to 1949.[82] The introduction by the Tibetan government-in-exile's Office of Information and International Relations to the survey of Sino-Tibetan relations by Tashi Tsering speaks of "the Chinese invasion and occupation in 1959," with "invasion and" whited out.[83]

Tibetan government accommodated an arrangement with Chinese provincial powers in which much was informal and left unarticulated in official agreements

If this shows some rather sloppy stitching in the Tibetan construction of what Tibet is, the inclusion of Tibet within the Chinese vision of China has also produced some bizarre twists of logic. One such twist relates to language and stems from the same motivation that is at work in the Chinese revision of the term *Han* 漢 (汉)—a synonym for Chinese now marshaled in order that "Chinese," an otherwise ethno-linguistically specific designation, can be applied to Mongols, Tibetans, and other national minorities. The Tibetan language has never treated the term for China, *Rgya-nag*, as meaning anything other than the country neighboring Tibet to the east. Its field of meaning does not encompass Tibet, much as the Tibetan name for Tibet, *Bod*, does not encompass China. An article from *China's Tibet*, published in 1991 to commemorate the signing of the Seventeen-Point Agreement, described some of the translation problems that arose during the agreement's negotiation. It contained a telling comment: "In [the] Tibetan language, there was no word which meant 'China.'"[84] The author, who worked as a translator during the negotiations, then notes that the Chinese name for China had to be transliterated to provide a usable term. In effect, since the Chinese position was that Tibet had been an integral part of China for centuries, the only possible interpretation for this anecdote, if one takes it at face value, is that the author considered Tibetans to be ignorant of the name of their own country. Of course that ignorance is an invention; what the Tibetans were unaware of was the beginning of a process of molding and manipulating a new Tibetan identity.

But this process was part of the construction of China and the Chinese identity. Because of the authoritarian underpinnings of that construction, questions about the validity of the historical case behind Tibet's incorporation in the PRC become fraught with existential overtones. If Tibet is presented as an "integral" part of China, the implications for the

integrity of a China so constructed are fundamental once the legitimacy of that position is undermined. Thus, the simple realization that certain elements in the contemporary vision of China are modern contrivances and hardly a legacy handed down from time immemorial has very serious ramifications. One might carry the thought further: calling this vision into question also raises issues about the political structures that derive from a fixed notion of China and the Chinese identity; in its own way this raises issues about a government that stakes so much of its legitimacy on its perceived ability to deliver a specific vision of China.

Conclusion

The historical status of Tibet is hardly a small matter of clarifying some textual misunderstandings; were that the case, this paper might indeed be welcome to all parties. The issue has a resonance well beyond that; the positions of the parties to the Tibet issue are imbued with questions of political and national identity and grounded in decades of polemical, diplomatic, and military struggle. The facts as established by recourse to the historical record are wont to be subject to divergent interpretations; some elements are emphasized, others ignored. Why then acknowledge these facts?

For one thing, there is the sheer necessity—and natural impetus—to know as much as can be known of the path that has lead to the current situation. This understanding is central to any attempt to gain control over the issue; even if the parties to it have different views of the historical facts, we still need to know what those facts are, as well as the manner in which they are being disputed.

Then there is the reality that the fundamental place of history in the Tibet issue is not something imposed by outside parties. Even though the Dalai Lama and his exile government appear quite at ease with accepting Tibet as a part of China, the PRC has pointedly accused the Dalai Lama of duplicity, stating that his unwillingness to recognize Tibet as having been an integral part of China for centuries renders his acquiescence unacceptable.[85] The centrality of history in the question of Tibet's status could not be made clearer.

Therefore, it does matter whether the Yuan dynasty made Tibet a part of China in the thirteenth century. The Dalai Lama's refusal to accede to this proposition has, on the face of it, become one of China's primary stated reasons for the impasse over the Tibet issue. In this context it matters, too,

that Chinese commentators into the 1950s held that Tibet had been a vassal state of the Qing.

Similarly, the use of the Golden Urn in recognizing Tibetan incarnations is a significant issue. It is clearly meant to impart legitimacy to Chinese control over the incarnation of high lamas (with a particular eye to the Dalai Lama's next incarnation) through the establishment of historical continuity. The PRC, in excoriating the Dalai Lama for not accepting its use of this Qing procedure is consciously manipulating a historical element in Sino-Tibetan relations. It is impossible to ignore China's desire for historical precedent here as a legitimizing element for its administration of Tibet.

The centrality of history in the question of Tibet's status could not be made clearer.

Both the question of the priest-patron relationship as one exclusive of political subordination and the status of territories outside the control of the Dalai Lama's government on the eve of Tibet's incorporation into the PRC are likewise questions that still provoke strong, official pronouncements meant to assert historical antecedents to legitimize or contest current circumstances. As we have seen, the presentation of Tibet's relationship with imperial China as a religious one, with no acknowledgement accorded the attested subordination of Tibet to the emperors of the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Qing dynasties, is a misrepresentation of the historical record. There is a bit more ambiguity about the territorial identity of Tibetan areas outside the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama's government, but it remains a fact that in 1949, when those areas were taken under the administration of the PRC, the Tibetan government did not claim its territory had been invaded.

In spite of all this, one might still say the status of Tibet, whatever it was in the past, is now settled, and the incorporation of Tibet into China has long since been a fait accompli. But settled issues have the capacity to rear up unexpectedly and catch the political state of affairs unaware. And it is then that history becomes vital. It would be sensible to have a grasp of that history before the fact.

Endnotes

1 *Tibet—Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation* (1992), p. 17.

2 *Tibet: Proving Truth From Facts* (1993), p. 1.

3 *Papers Relating to Tibet* (1904): 154–55.This early-twentieth-century assessment did not preclude Britain from avowing in 1950—when it no longer wanted to be party to the Tibet issue—that Tibet's status vis-à-vis China was actually unclear. The judgments of other third parties regarding Tibet's relations with China have also fluctuated during the twentieth century.

4 What PRC publications render in their English versions as "integral" or "inalienable" is a Chinese term that has the more literal meaning of "inseparable" (Ch. *buke fenge* 不可分割).

5 There are innumerable examples of these sorts of writings that can be adduced; two well-known examples are *100 Questions* (1989), and *Tibet—Its Ownership* (1992).

6 Epstein (1983): 15.

7 Xizang shehui kexueyuan et al. (1986).

8 Again, there is a variety of examples that can be cited, but one may see, typically, *Tibet: Proving Truth from Facts* (1993).

9 "On 'Tibetan People's Right to Self-Determination'" (1990): 2. Cf. "What Is It" (1990): 21–22: "Everyone with some knowledge of Chinese history knows that China is a unified, multi-national country and was created by the concerted efforts of all its 56 ethnic groups, Tibetans included, over a long term historical development. As early as the 13th century … Tibet was incorporated into the territory of China. …"

10 A number of volumes have been published in the PRC aimed at providing documentation for China's position, such as Xizang shehui kexueyuan et al. (1986); Bod rang-skyong-ljongs yig-tshags-khang (1995); and the important seven-volume collection Zhongguo Zangxue yanjiu zhongxin et al. (1994). Other works present

a wide array of materials that, if not clearly supportive of a case for Chinese sovereignty over Tibet from the thirteenth century on, do provide a wealth of materials on Tibet's interactions and dealings with China's dynastic governments. Among these are works in both Chinese and Tibetan, including the four-volume collection of Tibet-related extracts from the standard Chinese dynastic histories, Chen Xiezhang et al. (1982–93); as well as Gu Zucheng et al. (1982) and (1985); Bod-ljongs yig-tshags khang dang krung-go'i Bod-kyi shes-rig zhib-'jug lte-gnas (1997); Bkra-shis dbang-'dus (1989); and two different collections bearing the same title: Bod rang-skyong-ljongs spyi-tshogs tshan-rig-khang and Krung-dbyangs mi-rigs slob-grwa'i Bod-rig-pa'i zhib-'jug khang (1986); and Krung-dbyangs mi-rigs slob-grwa'i Bod-rig-pa'i zhib-'jug tshogs-chung (1989).

11 For the texts of these various agreements see Lamb (1966): 237–64.

12 See Wang Gui et al. (1995): 173–202.

13 Boundary Question (1940): 7–8. In addition to the nonhistorical subjugation of Tibet in 1206 by Chinggis Qaγan, one finds in the same statement the fanciful notion of a Chinese expedition entering Lhasa in the seventh century.

14 Dreyer (1976): 16–17.

15 Goldstein (1989): 715–16.

16 This vagueness is reflected most clearly at the beginning of the text of the "Seventeen-Point Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," signed by representatives of the Dalai Lama's government and the central government of China on May 23, 1951: "The Tibetan nationality is one of the nationalities with a long history within the boundaries of Tibet." See Bod rang-skyong-ljongs yig-tshags-khang (1995), doc. 100.

17 Xie Bin (1926): 20–21: 於乾隆五十七八兩年 (一七九二年，一七九三年，) 迭將中國與西藏之關係，從根本上加以改革。 並確定中國對於西藏之主權，此後切實行使之矣。

西藏自上述根本改革以後，純然夷爲中國之藩邦。西藏不第有宗主權已也，並其主權亦屬中國。

18 Wang Qinyu (1929): 13: 駐藏辦事大臣之行事儀注，由是始與達賴班禪同等，其在西藏始握有政治之特權。自此以後，西藏乃確定爲我中國之藩屬

19 Huang Fensheng (1953): 111: 乾隆五十七年(一七九二)在出兵平定廓爾喀侵藏的軍事勝利之後，頒佈了所謂「西藏善後章程」，規定駐藏大臣與達賴、班禪平等，並具有直接控制政治、軍事、宗教、財政、通訊、交通諸大權。西藏至此完全成爲中國領土的一部分。

20 *Xian Zongtong Jiang gong gao Xizang tongbao shu* (n.d.): 1. The English translation states (p. 6), "I wish to affirm emphatically that in connection with the future political status and institutions of Tibet, as soon as the puppet Communist regime on the mainland is overthrown and the people of Tibet are once again free to express their will, the Government will assist the Tibetan people to realize their own aspirations in accordance with the principle of self-determination."

21 *Concerning the Question of Tibet* (1959): 195.

22 Ibid., 188–89. Note that the book erroneously gives the name of another emperor, "Khri-lde tsug-ldan," i.e., Khri-lde gtsug-brtan, who reigned a century earlier.

23 Ibid., 190.

24 All of the general histories of Tibet published during this period give support in one form or another to Tibet's status as a part of China since the Yuan period. These include Dung-skar Blo-bzang 'phrin-las (1981); Rgyal-mo 'brug-pa (1995); Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing (1981); Chab-spel Tshe-brtan phun-tshogs and Nor-brang O-rgyan (1990); Thub-bstan phun-tshogs (1996); Zangzu jianshi bianxiezu (1985); and Huang Fensheng (1985). This last work is by the same author cited in note 19. It was edited for posthumous publication, and the editor notes that revisions and additions were specifically needed with regard to the author's account of the Yuan, Ming, and other periods. Unlike Huang Fengsheng (1953), this work conforms more to the interpretation that Tibet came under Chinese rule during the Yuan and not the Qing. However, owing perhaps to an editing slip, Tibet is said to have become simply a vassal state of China during the period of Mongol rule (p. 224). Several other works are more specifically focused on the establishment of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet during the Yuan. Among this group are Wang Jiawei and Nima jianzan (2000); Wang Gui et al. (1995); Deng Ruiling (1989); and Zhang Yun (1998). These titles represent a very small portion of the output of Chinese historians of Tibet. It should be stated that, controversial and politicized issues such as the status of Tibet aside, there is a tremendous amount of valuable and original research on Tibetan history that is being done by many of the scholars cited here as well as by a much larger number who have not been cited. Indeed, it is nigh impossible to carry out serious research on Tibetan history without taking into account the work of contemporary Tibetan and Chinese historians.

25 See Zhu Xiaoming and Suo Wenqing, eds. (1999). The text is unpaginated; the information is in the text of the beginning section, titled "The Conferment of Honorific Titles upon Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas by the Central Government through the Ages."

26 *Loc. cit.*

27 See, for example, Che Minghuai and Li Xueqin, eds. (1996).

28 See, for example, Wang Yuping (1996): 29–33; Wu Yuncen (1996): 34–42; Liao Zugui, Chen Qingying, and Zhou Wei (1995): 38–46; Ainam (1996): 6–9; Doje Cedain (1996): 2–6; *Shishi Banchan zhuanshi lingtong xunfang rending zuochuang xiezhen* (1996): 93–128; and Guo Xin (n.d.): 61–68.

29 See Zhou Weizhou (1984): 147–205; Yang Gongsu (1992): 72–150; Wang Yuanda (1993): 229–319; and Zhou Weizhou (2001): 249–371.

30 Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing (1981): 184–85.

31 Zhou Weizhou (1984): 553–92.

32 Zhwa-sgab-pa Dbang-phyug bde-ldan (1976).

33 *Boundary Question* (1940): 3.

34 Ibid., 9.

35 Ibid., 10.

36 Ibid., 1.

37 *Tibet in the United Nations* (n.d.).

38 On the concept in general, see D. Seyfort Ruegg (1991).

39 Such, at least, is the impression generated by the account of the Dalai Lama's responses, in 1930, to questions on Sino-Tibetan relations posed by an envoy sent

from China given by Tieh-tseng Li (1960): 153. Note that the author states (p. 274) that the Dalai Lama's statements, including his remark that relations between China and Tibet could be restored "if the Central Government would treat the patronage relationship between China and Tibet with sincerity and good faith as it previously did," are translated from the official Chinese translation of the Tibetan text of the Dalai Lama's responses, itself copied "word for word from the archives of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission."

40 *Truth about Tibet* (n.d.): 13.

41 Ibid., 14.

42 *Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law* (1959). The Indian jurist Purshottam Trikamdas did the preliminary research for the group's "Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet." He later contributed the historical introduction to *Tibet in the United Nations*, published by the Dalai Lama's New Delhi bureau (and cited in note 37).

43 Richardson (1962): 42.

44 Dalai Lama (1964): 68.

45 Zhwa-sgab-pa Dbang-phyug bde-ldan (1976): 301: *Go-dan Khāng-gis Sa-skya paṇḍitar phul-ba'i 'ja'-sa dang/ Kub-la'i Khāng-gis 'Phags-pa rin-po-cher phul-ba'i 'ja'-sa gnyis-bsdur na/ dang-po de dpon-pos mi-ser-la btang-ba lta-bu dang/ rjes-ma de sbyin-bdag-gis bla-mar phul-ba lta-bu zhig snang/ rang-cag Shar-dkyil mi-rigs-tsho'i bsam-blo gtong-stangs-kyang de-rang yod-cing/ bla-ma chos-kyi thog-nas bstan-pa rgyas-pa dang/ 'gro-ba bde-ba'i bka'-slob dang mdzad-pa gnang-ba dang/ yon-bdag yin-gis dpal-'byor thog-nas de yun-nas yun-du gnas-pa'i don-la zhabs-'degs zhu-dgos-pa ltar/ Bod dang/ Sog-po'i dbar-gyi mchod-yon-gyi 'brel-ba'ang de lta-bu zhig yin zer/ 'on-kyang Nub-phyogs-pa'i srid-don-gyi 'gro-stangs thog 'di lta'i 'grel-bshad byed mi-thub-pa zhig yod-'dug/ Nub-phyogs-pa-tshos gong-gi lo-rgyus-la zhib-cha nan-po zhig byas-na/ Khāng-gis 'Phags-pa rin-po-che'i thugs dang mi-'gal-ba zhu-rgyu zhus-pa de-ga-rang-nas Bod-kyi dbang-cha mtho-shos 'Phags-pa rin-po-che nyid-la yod-pa Khāng-rang-gis khas-len zhus yod-pa dang/ da-dung Khāng-gis chos zhu-stangs dang/ gus-zhabs zhu-stangs/ Sman-tse'i yul len-dus bka'-slob zhu-stangs/ tham-ga dang/ mtshan-stod-kyi tshig-don/ A-mdo'i yul-bar phebs skyel-du ngo-bcar zhu-stangs/ bla-ma'i bka'-yin dbang-la cha-bzhag-ste Bod-du zhib-gcod-pa gtong-stangs sogs gang-sa-nas rgyal-khab phan-tshun gnyis gcig-phan gcig-grogs dang/ che-mthongs 'bul-res byas-pa ma-gtogs/ rgyal-khab gcig-gi 'og-tu gcig-med-pa gsal-por mtshon-pa de-ltar mchod-yon-gyi 'brel-ba 'di gzhi-la bzhag-ste Bod dang/ Rgya-nag gnyis dbar-la'ang rab-byung bco-lnga-pa'i lcags-phag 1911 lor Ching-ngam Man-ju gong-ma'i dus-rabs ma-rdzogs-bar phan-tshun mchod-yon-gyi 'brel-ba'i bya-ba gong-mtshungs lta-bur yod-do//.*

46 See Jamyang Norbu (1989): 91–92. We may note too that van Walt was slated to be part of a proposed team the Tibetan government-in-exile put together in the late 1980s to negotiate with China; his inclusion elicited a refusal from the PRC to entertain formal discussions of the Tibet issue with any non-Tibetans or a team that included non-Tibetans in its ranks.

47 Van Walt van Praag (1987): 5.

48 Ibid., 12.

49 Ibid., 127.

50 Van Walt-van Praag (1985): 1.

51 *Bod dang/ Man-ju'i 'brel-bar dpyad-pa'i gtam dus-skabs lnga-can* (1999): 124: *Bod dang Man-ju'i 'brel-ba dngos-byung khag-la dpyad-zhib byas-pa'i snying-por/ Bod Man-ju'i khongs-gtogs min-pa dang/ Bod Man-jus dngos-su 'dzin-skyong ma-byas-pa'i gnas-lugs gtan-la-phab-pa yin-zhing/.*

52 Zhwa-sgab-pa 669–70 and 678–79.

53 Van Walt van Praag (1987): 125–26.

54 Tashi Tsering (1988): 5–7.

55 Ibid., 11–12.

56 Reference has been made above to the Dalai Lama's 1959 statement in this regard. The travels of Tibetan representatives have been especially invoked by Zhwa-sgab-pa, who was a member of one of these missions. The first edition of the English-language version of his history of Tibet included a facsimile reproduction of his traveling papers with the various foreign visas and related stamps on it.

57 Dalai Lama (1964): 72.

58 Ibid., 244 and 247.

59 See the geography chapters in Song Lian (1976): 58:1345–63:1585.

60 *Tibet—Its Ownership* (1992): 3–4: "In the mid-13th century, Tibet was officially incorporated into the territory of China's Yuan Dynasty. Since then, although China experienced several dynastic changes, Tibet has remained under the jurisdiction of the central government of China. … The regime of the Mongol Khanate changed its title to Yuan in 1271 and unified the whole of China in 1279, establishing a central government which, following the Han (206 BC–220) and the Tang dynasties, achieved great unification of various regions and races within the domain of China. Tibet became an administrative region directly under the administration of the central government of China's Yuan Dynasty."

61 Danzeng (1996): 25: 1271 年，蒙古汗政权定国号为元，创建了中国各地区、各民族大统一的中央政权，西藏地区成为中国元朝中央政府直接治理下的一个行政区域。

62 Zhao Ping and Xu Wenhui (2000): 82–83: 元朝对西藏实施统治和管理大约从 13 世纪中叶开始。1264 年， 忽必列迁都北京， 同年，忽必列在中央政府内特设总制院。总制院全名是释教总制院，它的建立完全出自蒙古统治者的匠心独运，即它是具有双重职能的机关：1. 负责处理全国包括汉地的佛教事务；2. 直接管辖藏族地区。

63 Wang Gui et al. (1995): 70: 至于元朝中央政权对西藏地方的实际统治和整套的施政方略， 史实更是不胜枚举，在此不能一一系列

64 See, for example, Wang Gui et al. (1995), which is meant specifically as a rebuttal of both books, as well as Wang Jiawei and Nima jianzan (2000); and Bod rang-skyong-ljongs «Bod-kyi srid-don rgyal-rabs» blta-bsdur mchan-'god tshogs-chung (1996).

65 Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing (1981): 82: 明朝起初在河州设立西安行都指挥使司， 统辖全国藏族地区。后来又改设朵甘行都指挥使司和乌思藏行都指挥使司，分别管理藏族地区。。。朵甘行都指挥使司，管辖以青海西宁为中心的安多藏族地区。。。乌思藏行都指挥使司的管辖范围，即今西藏的大部分地区。

66 See Gu Zucheng (1982): 29–30. It should be noted that the three military commissions mentioned were established at the same time, with the Mdo-Khams and Dbus-Gtsang units deriving from what had previously been designated guard (Ch. *wei* 衛) units for the two areas.

67 On Wei Zheng, see his biography in Zhang Tingyu et al. (1974): 134: 3905–6. Note that for a long period he used the surname Wei, which was that of his adoptive father; as a reward for service rendered to the Ming dynasty at Hezhou, he was given imperial permission to use his original surname, Ning 甯.

68 Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing (1981): 83; and Wang Jiawei and Nima jianzan (2000): 28–30.

69 See Sperling (1998): 333.

70 See Dar-han Blo-bzang 'phrin-las rnam-rgyal (1998): 34, for a telling instance in which it was ordered that the Golden Urn be used in selecting the tenth Dalai Lama.

71 *Bod dang/ Bar-khams/ Rgya Sog bcas-kyi bla-sprul-rnams-kyi skye-phreng deb-gzhung* (1991): 281–369.

72 Ibid., 292.

73 Wu Fengpei (1984): 48. Zhao's comments are found in a 1907 memorial on measures to be taken in Khams. Cf. the memorial of the *amban* Lianyu 聯豫, who, two years later, likewise compared the necessary Qing tasks in Tibet with the colonial enterprises of the British, Americans, French, and Dutch (Wu Fengpei 1979: 88). I am grateful to Tashi Rabgey for pointing out Lianyu's remarks to me.

74 As in *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (1985): 184.

75 Zhang Zhirong (2000): 428–29. Cf. the author's somewhat labored attempt to draw a hard and fast distinction between the terms *fanshu* and *waifan* 外藩. Nevertheless, the latter term is also generally understood to indicate a vassal state.

76 E.g., Yang Gongsu (1990).

77 Crossette (2002): "'Political separation from China is not important,' [Samdhong Rinpoche] said. 'What is important is to restore Tibetan civilization. Tibet is not simply a nation or state. It is a unique cultural and spiritual heritage. It could be preserved within China—or it could not be preserved even if we were separate from China. Our basic objective is to preserve it in future for the benefit of all humanity, all sentient beings. China is not our enemy. … China is a people who need our cooperation, who need our guidance, spiritually. It has been so for more than 1,000 years."

78 See Blo-bzang shes-rab et al. (1993?); and Zhou Dunyou (1993) 7: "After the death of the 16th Living Buddha Garmapa, the Curpu Monastery sect adherents, following his testament and religious practices and rituals, found his successor, the reincarnated soul boy Ogyain Chilai, in Qamdo Prefecture of the Tibet Autonomous Region in May 1992." The article gives a detailed account (pp. 8–9) of the installation ceremony with no mention of the Golden Urn.

79 For more on the Golden Urn, see Elliot Sperling, "The Recognition of Tibetan Incarnations: Qing Dynasty Regulations and Their Significance for Modern Sino-Tibetan Relations," unpublished paper presented at the conference "Tibet in the Contemporary World," University of British Columbia, Vancouver B.C., April 19, 2004.

80 See “True Copy” (1952): 2.

81 *Status of Tibet* (n.d.): 9.

82 *Status of Tibet—A Brief Summary* (1987): 10.

83 Tashi Tsering (1988): i.

84 Huang Mingxin (1991): 13.

85 See, e.g., “Dalai Lama Holds Firm on Tibet” (1998).

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Project Information

The Dynamics and Management of Internal Conflicts in Asia
Project Rationale, Purpose and Outline

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Rationale

Internal conflicts have been a prominent feature of the Asian political landscape since 1945. Asia has witnessed numerous civil wars, armed insurgencies, coups d'etat, regional rebellions, and revolutions. Many have been protracted; several have far reaching domestic and international consequences. The civil war in Pakistan led to the break up of that country in 1971; separatist struggles challenge the political and territorial integrity of China, India, Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka; political uprisings in Thailand (1973 and 1991), the Philippines (1986), South Korea (1986), Taiwan, Bangladesh (1991), and Indonesia (1998) resulted in dramatic political change in those countries; although the political uprisings in Burma (1988) and China (1989) were suppressed, the political systems in these countries as well as in Vietnam continue to confront problems of political legitimacy that could become acute; and radical Islam poses serious challenges to stability in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India. In all, millions of people have been killed in the internal conflicts, and tens of millions have been displaced. And the involvement of external powers in a competitive manner (especially during the Cold War) in several of these conflicts had negative consequences for domestic and regional security.

Internal conflicts in Asia (as elsewhere) can be traced to three issues—national identity, political legitimacy (the title to rule), and distributive justice—that are often interconnected. With the bankruptcy of the socialist model and the transitions to democracy in several countries, the number of internal conflicts over the legitimacy of political system has declined in Asia. However, political legitimacy of certain governments continues to be contested from time to time and the legitimacy of the remaining communist and authoritarian systems are likely to confront challenges in

due course. The project deals with internal conflicts arising from the process of constructing national identity with specific focus on conflicts rooted in the relationship of minority communities to the nation-state. Here too many Asian states have made considerable progress in constructing national communities but several states including some major ones still confront serious problems that have degenerated into violent conflict. By affecting the political and territorial integrity of the state as well as the physical, cultural, economic, and political security of individuals and groups, these conflicts have great potential to affect domestic and international stability.

Purpose

The project investigates the dynamics and management of five key internal conflicts in Asia—Aceh and Papua in Indonesia, the Moro conflict in southern Philippines, and the conflicts pertaining to Tibet and Xinjiang in China. Specifically it investigates the following:

1. Why (on what basis), how (in what form), and when does group differentiation and political consciousness emerge?
2. What are the specific issues of contention in such conflicts? Are these of the instrumental or cognitive type? If both, what is the relationship between them? Have the issues of contention altered over time? Are the conflicts likely to undergo further redefinition?
3. When, why, and under what circumstances can such contentions lead to violent conflict? Under what circumstances have they not led to violent conflict?
4. How can the conflicts be managed, settled, and eventually resolved? What are policy choices? Do options such as national self-determination, autonomy, federalism, electoral design, and consociationalism exhaust the list of choices available to meet the aspirations of minority communities? Are there innovative ways of thinking about identity and sovereignty that can meet the aspirations of the minority communities without creating new sovereign nation-states?
5. What is the role of the regional and international communities in the protection of minority communities?
6. How and when does a policy choice become relevant?

Design

A study group has been organized for each of the five conflicts investigated in the study. With a principal researcher each, the study groups comprise practitioners and scholars from the respective Asian countries including the

region or province that is the focus of the conflict, the United States, and Australia. For composition of study groups please see the participants list.

All five study-groups met jointly for the first time in Washington, D.C. from September 29 through October 3, 2002. Over a period of four days, participants engaged in intensive discussion of a wide range of issues pertaining to the five conflicts investigated in the project. In addition to identifying key issues for research and publication, the meeting facilitated the development of cross country perspectives and interaction among scholars who had not previously worked together. Based on discussion at the meeting five research monograph length studies (one per conflict) and twenty policy papers (four per conflict) were commissioned.

Study groups met separately for the second meeting. The Aceh and Papua study group meetings were held in Bali on June 16-17, the Southern Philippines study group met in Manila on June 23, and the Tibet and Xinjiang study groups were held in Honolulu from August 20 through 22, 2003. The third meeting of all study groups was held from February 28 through March 2, 2004 in Washington D.C. These meetings reviewed recent developments relating to the conflicts, critically reviewed the first drafts of the policy papers prepared for the project, reviewed the book proposals by the principal researchers, and identified new topics for research.

Publications
The project will result in five research monographs (book length studies) and about twenty policy papers.

Research Monographs. To be authored by the principal researchers, these monographs present a book-length study of the key issues pertaining to each of the five conflicts. Subject to satisfactory peer review, the monographs will appear in the East-West Center Washington series *Asian Security*, and the East-West Center series *Contemporary Issues in the Asia* Pacific, both published by the Stanford University Press.

Policy Papers. The policy papers provide a detailed study of particular aspects of each conflict. Subject to satisfactory peer review, these 10,000 to 25,000-word essays will be published in the EWC Washington *Policy Studies* series, and be circulated widely to key personnel and institutions in the policy and intellectual communities and the media in the respective Asian countries, United States, and other relevant countries.

Public Forums

To engage the informed public and to disseminate the findings of the project to a wide audience, public forums have been organized in conjunction with study group meetings.

Two public forums were organized in Washington, D.C. in conjunction with the first study group meeting. The first forum, cosponsored by the United States-Indonesia Society, discussed the Aceh and Papua conflicts. The second forum, cosponsored by the United States Institute of Peace, the Asia Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center, and the Sigur Center of the George Washington University, discussed the Tibet and Xinjiang conflicts.

Public forums were also organized in Jakarta and Manila in conjunction with the second study group meetings. The Jakarta public forum on Aceh and Papua, cosponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, and the Southern Philippines public forum cosponsored by the Policy Center of the Asian Institute of Management, attracted persons from government, media, think tanks, activist groups, diplomatic community and the public.

In conjunction with the third study group meetings, also held in Washington, D.C., three public forums were offered. The first forum, cosponsored by the United States-Indonesia Society, addressed the conflicts in Aceh and Papua. The second forum, cosponsored by the Sigur Center of the George Washington University, discussed the conflicts in Tibet and Xinjiang. A third forum was held to discuss the conflict in the Southern Philippines. This forum was cosponsored by the United States Institute of Peace.

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Background of the Tibet Conflict

Tibet has been a focus of international concerns for close to a century. Tibet's contested status as an independent state or autonomous region, the conditions prevailing within its territory—indeed, even its very borders—have all been the subject of controversy and sometimes violent struggle.

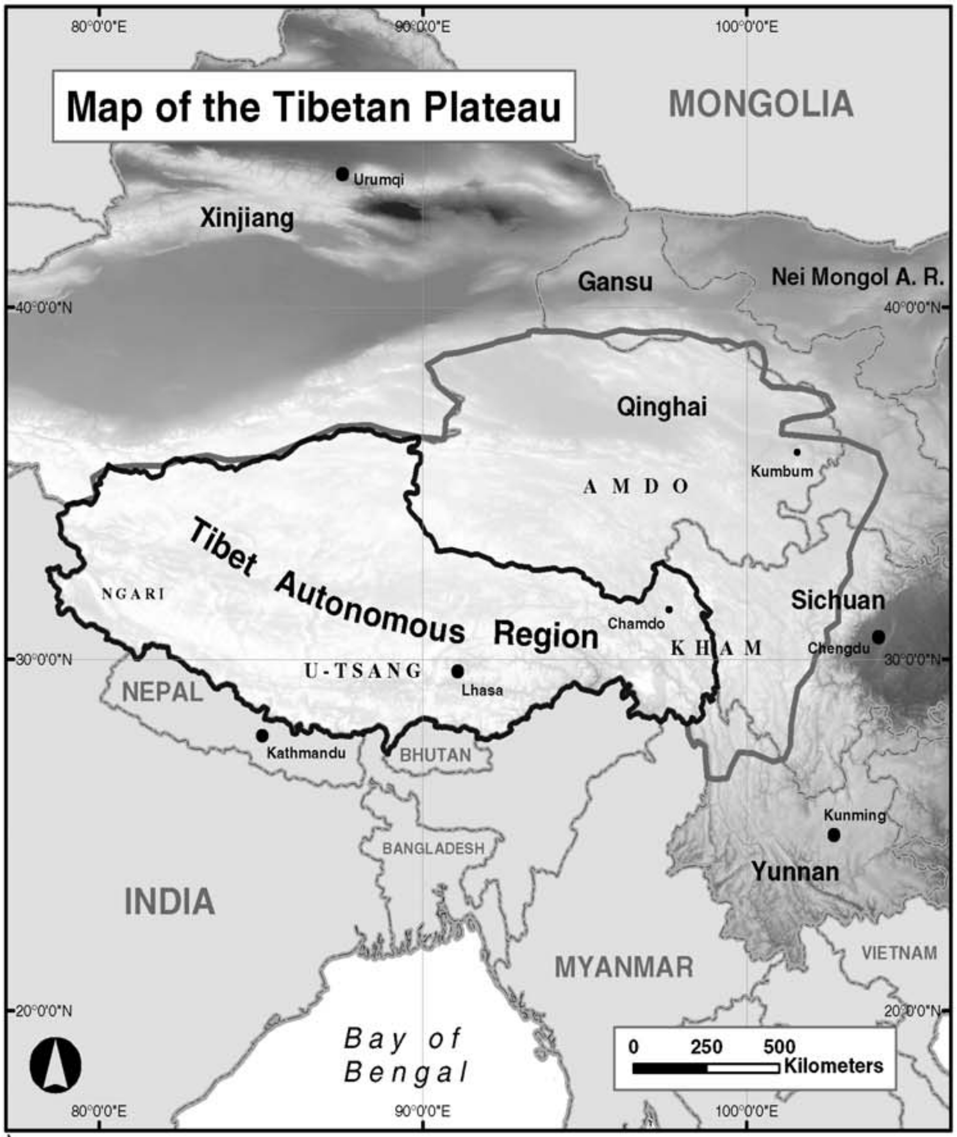
In 1911, when the Qing, China's last imperial dynasty, collapsed, Tibet emerged as a *de facto* independent state. That independence was not recognized by China, nor was it formally and unambiguously acknowledged by Britain, India or any other state. Nevertheless, under the government of the Dalai Lamas, Tibet did effectively function independently of China, with the requisites generally expected of states. However, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Tibet's *de facto* independence came to an end. In October of 1950, the People's Liberation Army, already in control of Tibetan-inhabited territory outside the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama's government, crossed the line into territory controlled by the Tibetan government; and Tibet was formally incorporated into the People's Republic of China by means of an agreement signed in May 1951. Friction, ambiguous expectations and interpretations of Tibet's status under that agreement, and the harsh and often brutal implementation of Chinese socialism in Tibetan-inhabited areas in the eastern portions of the Tibetan Plateau, all worked to spark a revolt in the 1950s that led ultimately to fighting in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, and the flight of the Dalai Lama and well over 100,000 Tibetans into exile, mostly in India and Nepal. Subsequent decades witnessed the implementation of Chinese policies on the Tibetan Plateau that followed what often seemed like radically different directions: the establishment of a Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965, the attempt to suppress a separate Tibetan identity in the 1960s and 1970s, economic liberalization and a relative loosening of cultural and religious restrictions in the 1980s, repression of any signs of separatist tendencies and allegiance to the Dalai Lama in the 1990s, etc. Such ambiguities and apparent contradictions have served to exacerbate the Sino-Tibetan relationship.

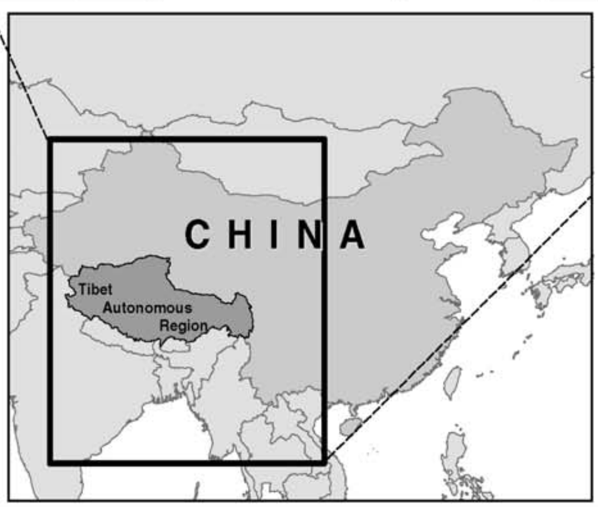
Internationalization of the Tibet issue followed upon resolutions passed by the U.N. General Assembly in 1959, 1960 and 1961, one of which explicitly supported the right of the Tibetan people to "self-determination." The result of this history has been to place legitimacy at the foundation of many of the other aspects of the Tibetan issue. Thus, more than half a century after the incorporation of Tibet into the PRC,

questions of economic development, cultural freedom, human rights, and demographics in Tibet all stand against the background of questions about the legitimacy of Chinese rule in the region. This sense of contested authority is further supported as much by China's protestations that there is no issue of Tibet (while at the same time insisting that the Dalai Lama must acknowledge that Tibet has historically been a part of China) as it is by the activities and pronouncements of Tibetan exiles relating to Tibet's right to independence or—on the part of the Dalai Lama—"real autonomy."

Attempts to resolve the Tibetan issue since the late 1970s have focused on formal and informal contacts and discussions between representatives of the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile on the one hand, and the Chinese government on the other. These have taken place periodically over the last twenty-five years, with no real resolution. Over the last two years such contacts have revived again, but even the nature of those contacts is disputed by both parties. For more than a decade the Dalai Lama has been able to meet with several world leaders who, at his urging, have periodically called on the Chinese government to approach or respond to him in an attempt to resolve the Tibetan issue.

Since 1988 the Dalai Lama has conceded the point of Chinese sovereignty and pressed Western governments to work for the preservation of Tibetan culture; and in 1989 the Dalai Lama was accorded the Nobel Peace Prize for his activities in support of Tibet. Nevertheless, the process of dialogue and confidence building remains at an impasse, and there is a lingering pessimism about any resolution of the Tibetan issue during the Dalai Lama's lifetime.





● Cities and Towns

TAR Boundary

Historical Tibet (est.)

Note: Kham region is largely divided between the TAR and Sichuan Province with smaller portions in Qinghai and Yunnan; Amdo region includes most of Qinghai with small portions also in Sichuan and Gansu.

Note: Map boundaries and locations are approximate. Geographic features and their names do not imply official endorsement or recognition by the UN.

List of Reviewers 2003-2004

The East-West Center Washington would like to acknowledge the following who have offered reviews of manuscripts submitted for publication in the *Policy Studies series*.

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About this Issue

The status of Tibet has been at the core of the Tibet-China conflict for all parties drawn into it over the past century. China maintains that Tibet is an integral part of China, while Tibetans maintain that Tibet has historically been an independent country. In reality the conflict over Tibet's status has been a conflict over history. When Chinese writers and political figures assert that Tibet is a part of China, they do so on the basis of history. The People's Republic of China has pointedly accused the Dalai Lama of duplicity, stating that his unwillingness to recognize that Tibet has been an integral part of China for centuries renders his attempts to compromise on the Tibet issue unacceptable. The centrality of history in the question of Tibet's status could not be made clearer. This paper is a guide to the historical arguments made by the primary parties to the Tibet-China conflict. It draws on the key assertions about the issue as they have been framed in Chinese and Tibetan to examine the extent to which positions on the Tibet issue that are thought to reflect centuries of popular consensus are actually very recent constructions, often at variance with the history on which they claim to be based.

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